

Future-Proofing and Connecting Community Pharmacy

The PharmacyConnect platform is proving to be a popular choice for Irish pharmacies; ensuring customer satisfaction whilst saving valuable time in pharmacy and reducing the risk of dispensing errors.



Cormac McKenna
(PharmacyConnect) and David Dodd
(David Dodd Pharmacy Greystones)

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in August 2021 and are very pleased with it so far,” he told Irish Pharmacy News.

“We’re seeing customers naturally gravitating to use it and the user experience at both the customer and pharmacy ends is really great. As an effective way to communicate with my customers and they with the pharmacy, it’s building up to be a real timesaver on the pharmacy side,” he adds.

“A further benefit is that the platform serves as a record of what the customer ordered thus reducing the potential for errors or omissions on both sides. Customers are happy too.”

Future Developments

The pandemic has shown us how quickly things can change and how technology can suddenly go from a nice-to-have to a must-have for businesses.

With an eye moving beyond customer orders and payments and to facilitating local deliveries, the PharmacyConnect team is working with several pharmacies on how this might work.

“We’re very much focussed on how to help pharmacies at a platform level to delight their customers and enhance their local brand. We see lots of potential to work with pharmacies to do this and the signs are very encouraging that customers will respond,” Cormac concludes.

For more information see PharmacyConnect.ie or email hello@pharmacyconnect.ie

Since early 2020, Irish pharmacies – like many businesses – have been grappling with changes and demands stemming from the pandemic. Many pharmacy managers are now looking ahead and examining ways that they can improve the efficiency of their operations while also improving the way they serve their customers. Inevitably this means looking at how they can make more effectively use of technology.

Improving Efficiency

The PharmacyConnect platform was conceived and developed specifically to provide a grounding for Irish pharmacies to serve their customers better while also improving the efficiency of their business. Developed by the team behind VillagePod – an app platform based on local gift cards for local communities – it enables pharmacies to deploy their own branded smartphone apps which facilitate the customer ordering journey.

“When we talked to local community pharmacies, they expressed a need for having a platform that would deliver the great user experience that customers are now used to from other industries” comments Cormac McKenna, VillagePod and PharmacyConnect founder.

Allied to the desire to serve customers better is the looming threat of new providers with different business models entering the market and encroaching on

the share of the market currently served by community pharmacies.

While Ireland may not have the imminent threat of Amazon entering the market as may exist in other geographies, there are notable examples of providers already operating in the Irish market – with ambitious expansion plans – who are innovating at pace.

Fundamental to the PharmacyConnect platform is that each pharmacy’s brand is front and centre with the customer; having its own branded presence within the Apple and Google app stores. “Adopting technology shouldn’t mean diluting your brand and that’s why we went down the route of delivering branded apps for each pharmacy client” said Siobhan Kennedy, Partner Manager with PharmacyConnect. “Customers must be given a context to ensure that they know that they are dealing with their local, trusted community pharmacy and not an anonymous aggregator.”

Healthmail

Key to the platform is how the pharmacy can use it to flexibly deal with inbound prescriptions from the HSE’s Healthmail system.

Cormac adds, “When we looked at the changes that had come about over the last couple of years in Irish pharmacies, the biggest single area was around the way most prescriptions were coming directly from the doctor to the pharmacy. While this improved security around prescriptions,

it also created an information vacuum for both the pharmacy and the customer as the customer had not sighted the prescription and the pharmacy often didn’t know what to dispense. Pharmacies were handling this in different ways, and so it was important to develop a flexible tool which enabled all pharmacies to handle it the way they wanted and to give them options to move more strategically when they were ready.”

Pilot Project

A key early supporter of the initiative was David Dodd of David Dodd Pharmacy Greystones, who reports very encouraging results.

“We launched our apps on the PharmacyConnect platform

