Zitomer Pharmacy Gains Strong Financial Improvements

Zitomer Pharmacy opened its doors in the 1950s as an upscale New York City pharmacy. Since then it has grown into a unique shopping destination and a landmark on Manhattan's chic Upper East Side. Located on Madison Avenue. Zitomer prides itself on carrying trendy, current, must-have items, while also maintaining a wide selection of prominent brands. In this interview with ComputerTalk's *Will Lockwood, Frank Vella, VP at Zitomer, describes why the business moved over to a new point-of-sale technology platform, and a few of the benefits it has gained as a result of the switch.*

ComputerTalk: What led your business to implement a new retail pharmacy technology solution?

Frank Vella: Zitomer Pharmacy strives to offer an unparalleled level of customer service and maintain the industry's most knowledgeable staff. To preserve our quality service levels, we decided to move away from an antiquated software system and implemented the Epicor Eagle N Series retail business management solution.

We wanted to find a point-of-sale (POS) system that would reduce our security concerns, streamline inventory management, improve billing operations, and better manage our nearly 3,500 house charge accounts. Epicor was a perfect fit. We can already see that our customer service levels are improving because we are able to spend less time on tedious back-office tasks, and more time with our customers.

Also, with mounting concerns about data breaches in retail, we wanted a system that would address security — not only in our back-office operations, but also our front-end POS. For example, implementing proper security at POS to limit price overrides and decrease return fraud. We were also

Upscale retail pharmacy frees up $100,000 in cash flow and enhances operations with new business technology.

concerned with credit-card and security breaches to our house account personal information. Epicor has a solid history of protecting businesses, which is a big reason we selected their Europay, MasterCard, and Visa [EMV] enabled security solutions. When we feel secure as a business, that trickles down to our customers. With Epicor, we can tell them we are doing all we can to keep their information safe.

CT: Strong inventory management is crucial for any business, especially when it comes to sometimes daunting pharmacy inventory. How did this business objective come into play when selecting the Epicor solution?

Vella: As a family-owned and -operated business with three shopping floors and over 15,000 square feet of retail space — including a 5,000-square-foot children's toy area — strong inventory management is crucial for Zitomer's success. We have a very big seasonal business, so it's important to have our usual inventory, seasonal, and postseasonal inventory at the appropriate stock levels. Robust inventory management was a key functionality we liked about the Epicor system. By utilizing the Epicor Eagle Inven-

tory Planner solution, we now have better control of our inventory. We can keep tabs on our inventory and make adjustments to carry the right items at the right time. In the first year of implementing Epicor solutions, better reporting helped us cut our inventory by 15%, which improved our cash flow. We were able to free up approximately $100,000 in cash flow for our business.

We also use the Epicor Compass tool for other reporting. For example, we find it instrumental to generate reports with Compass to see what product lines are selling the best. This helps us determine which orders to place for next year's inventory. This saves us money and gives us peace of mind that we'll have the products that our customers want.

CT: Customer loyalty has always been a hot topic for retail pharmacy. How is Zitomer doing in regards to loyalty?

Vella: To be successful in the independent pharmacy space, retailers must have access to up-to-the-minute information anytime, anywhere. One of the biggest benefits of the Eagle N Series system is the real-time information. It's quick, easy to use, stores all the information we need, and we can share that information with our customers to help increase loyalty.

The system's information capture capabilities and email receipts functionality have been big pluses for our customer base. This has been one way that we have been able to build our email list, and because we have such a high-traffic business, there are many customers who would probably never have heard from us. With email receipts and customer information, we're able to track them better and send them relevant promotions — which engages the shopper, increases traffic to our stores and website, and builds true customer loyalty. **CT**