

10 Keys to Pharmacists Success Under the Gold Dome



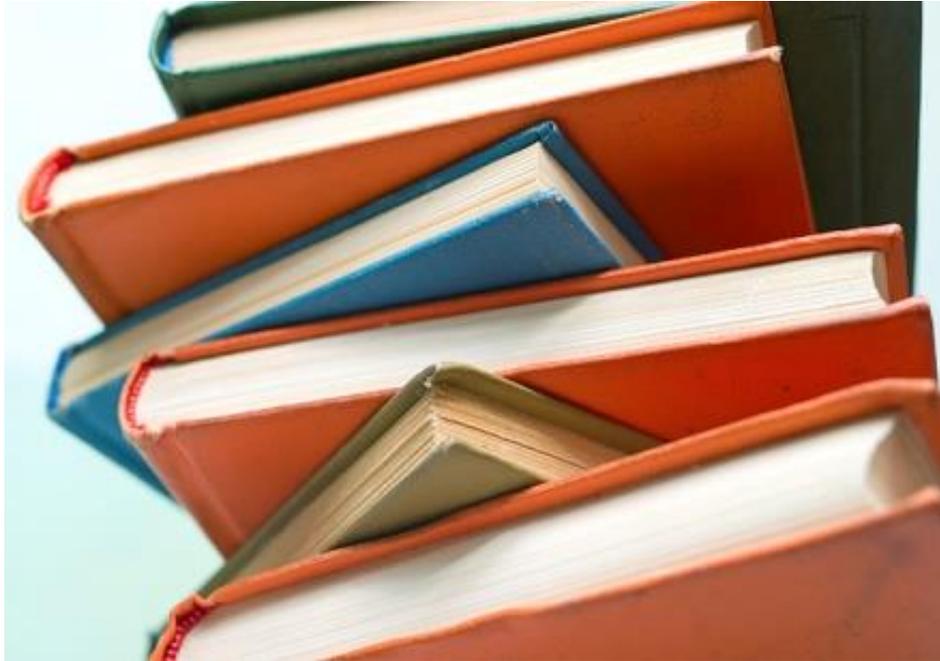
As of October 1, 2015 pharmacists are recognized as health care providers in the Colorado Revised Statutes in at least 11 separate locations. How this was achieved:

ONE UNITY

All practices settings, work environments and business representatives of pharmacy speaking in one voice are heard more clearly by the legislature. ANY dissenting opinion could lead to lack of credibility and acceptance of the pharmacists agenda.

In Colorado, while Executive Director for the [Colorado Pharmacists Society](#), Val Kalnins also led the Colorado Pharmacy Coalition. The CPC would meet regularly to broach new topics or issues, investigate outstanding legislative matters and review positions and opinions of those present.

Although not always in complete agreement, a mutual understanding developed, and prevailed, within the pharmacy community to remain neutral on contentious matters and not undermine positions held by others attending the CPC meetings



TWO

CREDIBILITY

Anyone in conversation with a legislator or representative of a regulatory agency understands that **complete** knowledge of the facts, laws, revised statutes, rules and regulations before speaking is critical to achieving your desired outcome. Knowing the etiquette of approaching these individuals is of great benefit also.

Having the right information at your disposal at the right time is learned through study and research.

In Colorado, Val Kalnins had worked on legislative committees since 1985 and, through the years of his experience, developed an institutional memory of the players in the capitol. As of 2018, colleagues continue to call on him for consultations.



THREE

RELATIONSHIP

From our first point, you'll understand that relationships within the pharmacy community are paramount but relationships **beyond pharmacy** and into the extended health-care community, legislative and representatives arenas and advocacy organizations are vital as well.

Through these relationships, you'll develop a keen sense of who to talk to when, for what issues, how to gain influence with the medical society, medicaid and the Board of Pharmacy, the most likely promulgator of the rules and regulations.

The personal relationships Val Kalnins developed while serving on various boards, committees and lobbyist companies in Colorado led to additional connections and furthered credibility with other decision makers in the state. He was once introduced by a legislator to a third party as "Mr. Pharmacy."



FOUR

VIGILANCE

Regular, often daily monitoring of newly introduced bills involved scanning for **any mention** of, or relationship to, "health-care" or "provider" or "drug" or "pharmacy" or "pharmacist" and more.

"Eyes and ears" are of primary importance. That is your physical presence at the legislative body looking and listening for any activity affecting your agenda.

*Throughout the Colorado legislative session (January - May), the "triumvirate" of collaborating pharmacy advocates and lobbyists often had two or even three **on-site at the capitol**, round the clock from early mornings to late nights. In certain circumstances, only one was available. Whoever was available sat in on the on-going hearings and continually monitored any legislative activity (day & night); all advocates made themselves available through phone calls, off-site meetings and emails 24-7.*



FIVE TACTICS

Yes, when you are advocating at a representative body for your position or agenda it is a chess game. Move - counter-move. Our preceding points have given you the background and foundation to clearly define your desired outcome and possible paths to achieve it.

The tactics for your next move may include moves like "lay-low" or "let the medical society take this one." They may be more along the lines of "Senator Joe" is not a friend of pharmacy but we can sway him to neutrality by playing on his support of medicare patient.

In Colorado, the tactics employed were to "add-on." An opportunity to add an amendment to a bill in active hearings was never passed without adding "pharmacist" in the list of "health-care providers" or adding pharmacy in the text describing the proposed law. Pending legislation on involving drugs? Make sure pharmacists are added through an amendment when applicable.



SIX

LISTEN

Remember how we mentioned "eyes and ears?" Neither eyes nor ears make much noise. At your state house, people love to hear **themselves** talk. That means you don't.

Listening is one of those tactics that is simple but not easy. As important as imparting your idea to your representative is learning when they're receptive and willing to help you. Learn this and then act appropriately.

By listening, learn all the votes on a given committee, house or senate hearing **before** the vote is called. Count those vote and determine if you need a delay tactic. You should know what is going to happen, before it happens.

For those of you who know Val, you'll note his entire demeanor exudes "I'm listening to you." His colleagues have cultivated these skills too.



SEVEN

COLLABORATE

Our points on Unity, Relationships, Vigilance and Tactics have skirted around another key point. Collaborate with your fellow lobbyists and advocates. Bring your issues to the table, listen to their points, develop relationships with them, take your share of attending the early morning and late evening meetings and strategize tactics with them. Lobbying for pharmacists is a all hands on deck, full team effort.

In the 2014 legislative sessions, the primary Colorado collaborators included Charlie Sheffield (Colorado Retail Council, NACDS), Spencer Guthrie (PharMA), Val Kalnins (Colorado Pharmacists Society), Brad Young (RxPlus, NCPA and IPC) and Kaiser Permanente (AMCP).



EIGHT

RECRUIT

After aligning the profession in support of your goal, your next key characteristic for success is recruiting supportive legislators. Bringing this team together at the proper time can result in a smooth, direct line to passage as opposed to a "block and tackle" effort if a certain individual lost face, is not considered as a major player for their past support or is recruited out of order in their ranking or leadership.

Before committing to "running a bill" it is the lobbyists for professional organizations who determine the senate and house teams to carry the bill through the legislative proceedings. Most beneficial to your effort are commitments of:

- Co-sponsorship with a member from each of the primary political parties willing to sign on as the "sponsor" of your bill
- Party leadership sponsorship if the party control is solid enough to carry the required numbers through all phases of legislation including possible vetoes

One of the benefits of having collaborative arrangements with the other professional lobbyists is the courtesy extended across your efforts to "not torpedo" each other. The legislators look to the lobbyists they trust in established relationship for guidance when dealing with newcomers in the arena.

Once the primary individuals are recruited, the lobbyists task of building the remainder of the support continues. With leadership and/or co-sponsorship in place additional recruitment tends to progress if no controversial subject matter in your agenda is perceived.

Through the years, pharmacy bills have been sponsored by members of one or the other or both political parties. Colorado legislation has been effective in years past as "pharmacy" worked regularly with all representatives. This has not been the case with other professions which would then find difficulty in building their legislative sponsorship team.

The pharmacy lobbyists, including Val Kalnins, would strategize as to which representatives in which houses were the ideal members to recruit for a given session. Through a series of soft approaches the team of legislators was slowly recruited to define those "friendly to pharmacy." Due consideration was given to relationships among those individuals and expected cooperation of the team individually and as a whole.



NINE NUMBERS

Similar to the previous point on collaboration, numbers are related to many of the previously mentioned success factors. Here we emphasize the number of votes you may represent. Legislators are keenly aware of issues that affect 100% of their constituents, sometimes are motivated by a squeaky wheel and rarely pay any mind to an individual with a personal agenda.

To maximize the effectiveness of "numbers," you need ... more numbers!

In either case, your government representatives know the status and neither gives a positive spin to add to the credibility of your arguments.

In the 2014 legislative session, the primary Colorado collaborators included Charlie Sheffield, Val Kalnins and Brad Young (RxPlus). Together they represented several hundred pharmacists as individuals and chain and independent pharmacy operators. Given the overall population, this is a significant but not overpowering percentage of the profession as the majority of pharmacists do little to support pharmacy legislation or even voice their position.



TEN

THE LONG VIEW

The institutional memory of what worked, why and how it worked and the sequence of what made it work remains a reliable resource when working for passage for your bill or for you to defeat an onerous amendment in someone else's legislation. But the twenty-twenty hindsight is not the only long lens to rely upon.

The profession of pharmacy has a long-standing history and portends to remain a viable career and profession into the future. Every ten years, in Colorado, the Pharmacy Practice Act sunsets. Although a pharmacist's knowledge and skill in understanding medications and drug interactions within the human body require years of focused study and experience, without passage of the act and the law in place, anyone could "be a pharmacist." Any action you take with representatives today could impact their view of pharmacists and pharmacy well into the future. A small slight could become a major irritant several years from now when that once junior representative becomes the house majority leader.

Professional, reputable and reliable may best describe how the Colorado pharmacy lobbyists operate. Val chose his modus operandi with a view always to the next sunset. While Executive Director, he publicly shared overall resulting legislation, while willing sharing additional details privately with those interested in a given topic. The lobbying plan continued successfully to bring "provider status" into the Colorado Revised Statutes while looking toward the next iteration of the Pharmacy Practice Act as the profession is well placed and respected in the state house.



A NEW MODEL

To share this expertise, support pharmacists – individually and en masse – **Value Pharmacists** is changing the paradigm:

- A voluntary, no cost online membership community of pharmacists and supporters.
- Identified minimally by city, state and zip and still useful in advocacy.
- Driven by “squeaky wheels” in the blog threads.
- Periodic surveys of the membership with read-outs in our posts.
- Minimal annual support reminders to cover web-based services costs.

We're available to assist with your pharmacy advocacy needs.

Contact Val: val@valuepharmacists or 303-669-3080.

We appreciate your continuing support.

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