

March 9, 2015

David Tompkins, Director
Integrated Design and Production Center
American Pharmacists Association
2215 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Dear David:

Here is the finished Précis of *Pharmacy Today*. I have taken into account the comments of the meeting on Friday, February 27, and modified the document. Remember, the Précis builds premises about your publication that inform the direction of the redesign, and describes the direction the design will take. Use this document to evaluate how well the designs that will follow in the coming weeks meet the guidelines of the document, and where they can be improved.

The major change in this document is describing an approach that will create a template for shifting the structure of the publication to a more standardized set of departments and the inclusion of a feature well.

My take on the meeting is that everyone is behind a major redevelopment of the publication, but that the editorial staff is worried about their ability to fulfill a new design. It seems apparent that the management staff has bought into the direction proposed in the Précis. The revised version, and the run sheet also attached, will show that we can begin to redesign PT for now, and give it the structure it needs to grow in the future.

Sincerely,



Robert Sugar

President, AURAS Design

Introduction

As the flagship publication of The American Pharmacists Association, *Pharmacy Today* has a dual responsibility of representing the Association and, as a significant communications product, providing readers with content of significant value and utility. However, touting membership initiatives, products and services can have a negative effect on the credibility of the content.

The recent reader survey revealed that many people find the content mix confusing in a way that undermines the value of the educational and industry information in the publication. Their confusion is a result of the navigation and prioritization of editorial, and how prominently the Association content is featured in each issue.

The biggest hurdle in the redesign of *PT* is revealing the structure of the magazine and revamping the content with new ways of conveying existing content. Review of the issues plus some understanding of the history of the publication might explain its current format. In the transition from tabloid “news periodical” format to traditional magazine, the content structure was carried over to the new issue map. This has created a magazine publication that uses the content structure of a news tabloid with much content uncategorized in each issue. Despite the differing structure, this content looks identical to repeating departments, confusing the reader as to what content appears every month versus what is a story just in the issue. Adding to the confusion is the use of running heads that repeat for certain story types, so that sometimes there actually are repeated heads in consecutive issues, even though the stories aren’t departments.

The result is that the current publication has the flat prioritization, staccato editorial rhythm, writing format and repetitive visual navigation that is associated with a tabloid trade publication archetype instead of a consumer-style B2B magazine. A first-time reader has a difficult time parsing what editorial is considered the most important in each issue; what things are departments or recurring content; and why a reader should pay more attention to some stories.

This is described in the reader survey as cluttered content, busy design and difficult reading. But more white space, greater leading in body text, and more graphics won’t address readers’ problems—they need more guidance to tell them what to read and in what order. And while the readers imply that there is too much content and recommend cutting it back, the actual problem is that readers just can’t figure out what topics matter to them and what parts they can skim or skip. They are simultaneously over- and underwhelmed.

The simple fact that your standard story template considers a highlights box a necessity on a single-page story is indication that, even internally, there is recognition of the reader fatigue the current format generates.

The goal of the redesign is to create a template more in line with a B2B archetype that uses regular departments, and highlights important stories through feature treatments.

Goals of the Redesigned PT

To address the editorial structure, taking a step away from the current line-up and agreeing to some basic mission goals will help direct the redesign:

- 1. The best representation of the power and credibility of APhA is producing a category-leading professional B2B publication.** This will involve more definitive segregation of APhA promotion and association content from the rest of the book, or even elimination of much of the current content.
- 2. More emphasis on editorial packages built around critical subject areas that emphasize readers' (that is, practicing pharmacists) concerns and utility.** Promotion of critical content involves expanding subjects into more fully developed stories (or a package of stories) given a higher profile treatment. It's one thing to promote a story as a feature and another thing for readers to *believe* that it's a feature. Significant value demands greater depth, stronger design, valuable sidebars (franchise-branded if possible) and practical take-away that gives readers new insights and practical ideas to improve their skill-set and business practices.
- 3. Stronger structure in the PT issue map of mission categories and magazine content types.** The new TOC breaks content into categories—Drugs&Diseases, Practice&Trends, and Law&Regulation, and groups the content into these sections, but it should be more than newly categorizing the content that you already have. Ideally, departments and columns should have obvious high concepts that address mission goals for the magazine and reader comments, and appear consistently in each issue. The goal is to repackaging the “news” stories into a format that gets a department treatment.
- 4. Stronger franchise content and branding.** Much of *PT* is unbranded. Building a stronger brand—with editorial concepts that are unique to your publication and reflect initiatives of APhA—makes readers remember and engage with your content. Branding is built three ways—1. Through distinctive design, 2. Using a structured system of editorial theme and variation for section and departments, and 3. Distinctive editorial concepts for both features and departments. More editorial concepts should be explored in the creation of a new issue map.

The Mission

The Mission for a publication describes the audience, scope and unique point-of-view that provide a blueprint for editorial structure and tone, and additionally presents a business rationale for successful maintenance and growth. A Mission Statement is different from a Positioning Statement often included in media kits, in that its blunt ambition is intended for internal use, not for public consumption. This should be your Mission Statement:

AUDIENCE

Pharmacy Today strives to be the **leading industry publication** serving pharmacists in **all professional capacities**, by promoting the APhA goal of **extending the role** of pharmacist participation in patient healthcare.

SCOPE

Pharmacy Today intends to be the **most valuable resource for continuing education and professional advancement** by clearly and thoroughly presenting the latest, most useful information on drugs and disease; advocating the expansion of best practices by searching out emerging trends and innovators within all parts the industry; and providing insight and analysis about regulation and rules that affect the modern pharmacy.

EDITORIAL INITIATIVE

Pharmacy Today, leveraging the industry expertise and powerful advocacy initiatives of APhA, actively seeks to **present innovations and ideas** from recognized thought-leaders and **stimulate articulate, well-moderated discussion** about industry concerns and take a leadership role in advancing solutions.

A carefully-worded Mission helps provide editorial direction in addition to scope and tone. Organization of the magazine, department categories and concepts, feature packages and recurring annual editorial initiatives should be evaluated for the degree to which they fulfill the Mission requirements.

PT defines its audience not only in terms of the type of pharmacy job, but also by a goal (which happens to parallel the Association goal, as it should) of what its audience expects—not just pharmacists, but those who are interested in the professional growth of their industry role. By leading with the intent of being the *industry-leading publication*, the Mission is setting up a business rationale for stimulating advertising and cooperative sponsorships.

The content goals of *education and professional advancement* serve as a broad gut-check. The specific categories are a distillation of content areas historically, economically and politically of concern to the audience, but it also contains editorial direction. Not just drug and disease information, but *clearly and thoroughly presented* information. Not just best practices, but a promise of finding and promoting *emerging innovations* in counseling and care. And not just rules and regulation, but *insight and analysis* of what their application means to the readership.

The aspiring editorial intent (and a compelling advertising lure) is producing a publication of superior content using the expertise of industry leaders and promising exploration of topics where APhA can promote its leadership position in advocating change. This intent helps develop editorial content that might be added. For example, can you create on-going content around APhA initiatives, industry change or controversial issues? Can you introduce new voices with a compelling point-of-view? That is how you make your publication more relevant to your readership.

Pharmacy Today Critique and Recommendations

Using the list of goals and the example of a Mission Statement as guides, how does the current magazine stand up to scrutiny, and what elements should a redesign consider? Examining the major components of the current publication and exploring possible alternatives can create direction and consensus for the redesign.

STRUCTURE & NAVIGATION

Much of the current publication presents a mixture of feature articles, columnists and departments. Some editorial elements have permanent positions, and the basic order is maintained but without any discrimination of category or template content. Several elements that break this template have dedicated scope—a quick news grazing section at the top, even before the TOC, an APhA dedicated grazing section, and a new drug overview bring relief to an otherwise repetitive format. The CPE content gets a moderate theme-and-variation change-up.

As might be expected, making sense of the flat structure is exacerbated by a navigation design that offers the reader little help navigating. Features, departments and special sections get exactly the same grid, typographic treatment and running-head style. The navigation bars at the top are not reliable indicators of the type of story or whether the content is a repeating part of the magazine's issue map. Without visual or typographic help, a reader has no indication of the nature of particular content, and outlier design elements attain undue prominence, skewing the overall impression of the content.

RECOMMEND Creating a standardized template of repeating monthly sections and departments will lead to navigation that enable readers to develop a sense of the book's scope. Feature stories should be grouped into a feature well, given more dramatic design and art treatments, and be expanded into packages of content.

TYPOGRAPHY & GRAPHICS

No one would argue that Palatino and Helvetica are legible and sturdy choices, but they are also generic and lack branding value. The simplicity of the typography styles that helps keep the book consistent throughout should not limit the opportunities for reader-entry points and the ability to convey more meaningful abstraction.

Text-heavy pages are not templated for graphics or design, so much of the spot art ends up as a small decorative filler or is shoe-horned in to fit a page requirement. The repeated use of a sleep-deprived person reaching for a clock in the "Insomnia" department is a bad example of spot art evils: it has nothing to do with the content of the particular story, it is obviously stock art and it is used merely as filler. Much of the other art is similar. Stock images of patient and pharmacist models interacting diminish the value of photography of actual profiled subjects. Charts and graphs are bland and do not present their value at a glance.

RECOMMEND Use new type families for the redesign that are more contemporary and provide a wide array of widths and weights. Create more sophisticated and diverse head treatments (eyebrows, decks, subheads) to help readers engage with content. Eliminate the highlight boxes. Eliminate the pull-quotes except for selected formats such as features or columnists. Allow stories to flow from page to page by combining single-page topics into longer

departments and/or reducing the words-per-page by twenty percent. Develop standard uses and formats for infographics that can augment stories. It would also be great if some departments were based on infographics instead of just accompanying other content. Eliminate stock photography unless it improves the meaning of a story.

COVER

The ITC Garamond nameplate doesn't follow the typography of the interior nor is used anywhere else. While a nameplate is more of a logo than a part of the type palette, it is still nice if there is some follow-through in the interior of the book. As it is, the nameplate lacks impact.

The use of portraits for covers has only a limited value for readers (out of 150,000 readers, maybe a few dozen care about seeing a portrait of the cover subject) and it necessitates making the biggest cut line about what is often the least-compelling feature. The other cutlines vary in value but are often hard to read against the image background. There is no direction or prioritization for the secondary cutlines. The template also has no format for a skybar, a corner-cut or tertiary cutlines.

RECOMMEND Create a distinctive, contemporary nameplate that carries branding power and is reflected in interior graphic elements. Re-imagine the cover to feature a mix of focus-feature topics, tent-pole stories and portraits (when they are appropriate because the feature is important). Add a better variety of cut line positions and options that give readers a better feel for the value of content. Eliminate clutter around the nameplate.

TOC

The lack of abstraction of story titles and too many disparate elements on the pages make parsing the book difficult. The new TOC introduced in January 2015 is a big step in a better direction. Even without changing the interior of the book, you have given readers a stronger impression about the content scope. But there are still problems with differentiating departments from features, and too much need for different colors, little icons and box treatments. But the overall problem with the TOC is the sheer number of elements that clutter the pages.

RECOMMEND Restructuring the book will improve the TOC too. Features should get a more prominent presentation with greater abstraction. The rest of the book should be broken into sections with content that can be clearly demarcated on the TOC's second page. Spurious elements like the editorial board and postal info should be moved. Creating a clean, enticing TOC that reflects the organization and prioritization of the content will also enhance its value as premium positions for advertising.

GRAZING

There are too many spurious grazing sections, each with a different branding. Although they each purport to have a different editorial scope, the overall effect is a cacophony of voices and a diminished sense of importance.

RECOMMEND A single front-of-book grazing section that can combine elements of all of the current grazing sections, and leads with a topical high-value story. This will create a strong lead-in to the rest of the magazine, unify branding, and have a distinct visual identity.

DEPARTMENTS

The navigation makes a visual understanding of exactly what constitutes a department difficult. Clearly there are columnists, content-area departments and high-concept departments. Only a few have a franchise-branded title, and most of those are too generic. The impression readers have—due to the lack of visual distinction between features, special sections and stories—is that the book is full of departments, not variety, and that they never can get a handle on what to expect issue to issue.

RECOMMEND All of the departments should be reevaluated for their content mix, both in terms of the Mission categories and their high-concept structure. Current content labeled as features should be evaluated for their general topics to see if they can fit into a regular department heading. Instead of using a single universal template, departments should have unique templates that improve their value. That requires thinking creatively about how each department imparts information instead of assuming they all are written in a standard essay style. This process can be approached incrementally, but can begin with creating regular departments that can encompass broad timely content.

FEATURES

It looks like there are no features in *PT*, only stories that don't fit into the regular departments. Most B2B and consumer magazines focus on features, and rely on theme-and-variation to generate content for the rest of the book. They do this for a very good reason. Readers expect to see feature stories treated differently than departments. The central question in the redesign: Should *Pharmacy Today* have features at all? The new TOC has eliminated the Feature heading entirely and sticks the stories under the general topic sections. Still, many of the non-department departments could be contained under a new rubric, but there are still stories that defy categorization.

RECOMMEND There is a need for a feature well in *Pharmacy Today*. The stories currently scattered throughout the book with a focus icon should be collected into a feature package. Special sections and vertical markets should be collected into a feature story. There should be a place in the magazine for a two- to four-page story about any category—as long as it is compelling to readers.

The “focus topics” are a place to start expanding content into features. Other elements in the calendar, such as the special sections, will also make a nice conversion into a feature-style story. Once a real feature well exists, the need to designate a “focus topic” will be redundant.

Short news stories might be collected under a “leading-news section” that can contain any content area but is linked by a breaking-news commonality.

OVERALL DESIGN & ARCHETYPE

The current version of *PT* is in many ways not as clean and clear as the previous design, which had more subtle navigation elements, a better, less-cluttered nameplate and a journal-like cover template that fit a more institutional member publication. The redesign in 2012 created an archetype more appropriate to a “real” magazine and less like an institutional publication. You are hampered by the last remnants of an outdated archetype—the membership periodical. All these current elements—the lack of feature well, the member portrait on the cover, the emphasis

on APhA business in the front of the book—do not serve a modern B2B archetype, or help compete with the other titles in your niche.

RECOMMEND *Pharmacy Today* should adopt an archetype that fuses B2B elements with a news magazine template. Streamline your content into obvious section-oriented departments by rebuilding or creating new department types by creating a mix of content-tropes (list, FAQ, Q&A, commentary, etc.) with better branding, and add a feature well that gives readers depth on topics of acute interest to them—something you already do.

Augmented by more contemporary typography, stronger reader entry points and more thematic departments and feature sidebars, *Pharmacy Today* can be a revelation to its readership.

The Association initiatives and goals can still be a part of the publication, they just need to be contained to a subordinate part of the book, and since APhA creates news-worthy initiatives, the ability to feature general-interest Association content in the grazing section and as occasional feature stories is always a possibility.

Pharmacy Today Action Plan

This is how AURAS would like to redesign the magazine, taking into account the previous mission goals and recommendations:

1. Improve the issue map by revamping content and branding to reflect stronger category-oriented sections through improved branding and content types. Current departments should be evaluated for reader take-away and branding potential, altered in structure or scope, and new departments should be created. The goal is to maximize the impact for readers of the content they want more of—information about drugs and overviews of treatment approaches for their clients; and practical stories and tools that can make their pharmacy a more valuable resource for clients and build loyalty and confidence. Yes, they are somewhat interested in legislation and policy, but they see it as too far removed from their daily struggles. The APhA content needs to take a back seat literally and be in the back of the book.

This is a rough run sheet for a redesigned PT with sample ideas for changing the branding of major sections. Individual departments will need to be worked out in a full-blown run sheet. Current small features in each of the categories need to be categorized as 1) Feature-worthy, 2) Capable of being fit into a content area that can be designated an on-going department, or 3) A small news feature that can go in an upfront news section:

COVER

TOC

EDITOR'S LETTER This should be about the issue content, not a general opinion piece. If there is a desire for a general topic it should become a new department. Masthead and postal information are on this page.

GRAZING SECTION (combining current sections, bulletin, highlights of PIA, Drug Info (as a sidebar) Hub, Showcase or new content that can be developed using APhA resources.

THIS MIGHT BE A WAY TO COMBINE NEWSY FEATURES INTO A SECTION WITH LITTLE EFFORT:

UPFRONT This section can contain news stories from any content category, and replace many

of the one-off news stories in the sections, which can then only contain departments

DRUGS&DISEASES This section needs some patient tear-outs and some short-take overviews. It needs some more high-concept department ideas.

PRACTICES&TRENDS also includes number of elements from current policy section that involve day-to-day administration or acclimation to new regulation and legislation. After all, that is really part of best practices.

FEATURE WELL includes the Focus topic, now eliminated as a navigational concept, any special sections, perhaps a third or fourth small feature, and the Health System Edition content presented as a feature package at the end of the well. Profiles would go in the well as part of a feature package, but only appear as a cover image when they are an important innovator or thought-leader with their own feature.

HEALTH SYSTEM EXCLUSIVE This additional content should be integrated into the main book to look seamless instead of being called out with special branding. If the ROI data support it, the HSE should be integrated into the main edition and sent to everybody. If there is still a desire for a split edition, it should be integrated into the TOC as an alternate form along with the cover split. It can be added to the feature well as a feature package with trailing departments or have its own section-level branding.

REGULATION&POLICY More pin-pointed to advocacy, actual new legislation, rules and regulations that are changing the way to do business, with implementation stories moving to the Practice section.

APHA WORKS (Pharmacists in Action) the entire section moved to back, minimized in size to just a few pages relating directly to Association Initiatives, lead by the CEO editorial. Items of general interest can be moved to the front grazing with an APhA credit.

NEW END PIECE. Something of an esoteric-socialization column that is reader-driven, like the *Interactives* section in Pharmacy Times, since MTM Pearls is not well-liked (mostly, I guess, because it contains little take-away and less amusement).

2. Develop a new, more flexible grid, new font choices and a navigation system that reflects the new issue map. A modular grid will create variation and consistency at the same time, and more contemporary fonts with better readability and a more modern typographic approach will signal a sea-change for the magazine.

3. Create a new cover template. New nameplate, eliminate APhA branding except for the mark, improve the tagline, move the date to the label box and add the web address. Rethink the cover concepts to promote a feature story. Minimize the newsstand look of the cutlines—this is a controlled circulation publication. Add page numbers for stories to get them into the book.

4. Build a simpler TOC. This will come from re-imagining the run sheet. First page contains feature well stories with longer abstracts. Keep the CPE story at the bottom. Minimize nameplate and enlarge month. With feature-style stories there should be better art available. Move postal information to editors page with masthead. On second page, minimize or eliminate the social icons, add more content to the departments by using the department title as an eyebrow, with the headline and an abstract. Move editorial board to another page. Add the HSE content integrated into the page; not in a special box, and if possible, create an alternate form for the first four pages to allow eliminating HSE from the main edition altogether.

5. Build better department templates. Instead of everything looking the same, we will develop department branding for all content not in the feature well, and explore using different editorial formats for current departments. The use of decks, eyebrows, heads and subheads will allow for more creative and shorter heads, leaving the deck and subheads to do the heavy editorial lifting. Developing distinctive info, chart and graph treatments will give the departments personality and color.

6. Create real feature formats. The feature well should have consumer-style design. In accordance with the archetype, it will stick to the font families and not be wildly graphic, but have enough variation in look to distinguish the feature stories from the rest of the book.

7. Try presenting CPE material a new way. This may not be acceptable, but since the CPE material is so valued by your readers, we would like to make the *PT* version of it better than other publications. This could include the idea of yellow-highlighting important content; using a major-minor design and putting the sample questions near the content; adding extra material at the front or end with more preparation information (greater context, value proposition etc.) or extended reading (references to other journal articles?) if they are interested.

Ramifications of the New Design

A redesign of this magnitude requires that problematic elements should be recognized before accepting the premises of the redesign, no matter how desirable they may seem.

1. The new magazine needs a content and structural reassignment. Reviewing features to determine department concepts that can regularly contain them and then provoke new content will take some redefinition of your planner, as will defining and growing true feature-style stories.

2. The new magazine will be more of an editorial and design challenge. Real feature stories require more art direction, clever layouts, longer and more thorough editorial, the creation of ancillary materials to fill out the story and more interesting head and decks. Will the staff be up to the challenge of producing this new editorial format?

3. Covers could cost more money and take longer to produce. Conceptual covers often require commissioned art and more editorial scrutiny than portraits, These will require work perhaps months in advance to make the monthly publication schedule. They could add another 12K to your art budget.

4. Except for the features, the rest of the book should be as easy or easier to produce. The new design will be templated and demand stricter word count in some instances, but formatting departments for more white space and run-on stories will eliminate packing the pages with filler elements.

5. New ways of doing current columns, new columns and new columnists should be added in the mix. Creating new departments and finding new writers will prove difficult and cost more money, but this can be done concurrently with using the new design.

Sample Run Sheet—February

Cover

TOC 1 / TOC 2

Editor's Letter/MASTHEAD

Letters/Social Media—Abstracted from e-mails, blogs, twitter etc. Short excerpts from longer letters with links to full letters online.

GRAZING

Short Items from: Bulletin, Non-association content from PIA, InfoDrug, Showcase, Conf Roundup

UP FRONT

Bulletin story

ACA

Deserts

Nicotine

Pregnancy

DRUGS&DISEASE

OTCs Today (latest OTC info)

Immunizations (eponymous)

New Drugs (eponymous)—Running Report

New Rules (eponymous)—FDA changes in labeling

Therapy (treatments for specific disease)—diabetes

Integrated Medicine(alt meds column)— Dietary Supplements

PRACTICE&THERAPIES

New Pharmacy (tools for running a better shop)—Measures

Leading Edge (new ideas in pharmacy)—Pharmacogenomics

One to One (counseling info)—Risk and Safety

Practice Made Perfect (workplace insight)—Stress

Technology (new apps, programs and hardware)—Creating Healthier Communities

Error Alert (don't make mistakes)—Be Explicit

MTM Pearls (lifestyle commentary column)—Column

FEATURE WELL

OTC Survey

Infectious Diseases

Suicide Prevention

Innovations

CCNC (Care models could be a department if it is regular)

HSE INSERT

Integrated Care (as a feature)

Insomnia—Column

Model Care (Profile of operation)—Jewish Home

Clinical Issues—ASHP overview

POLICY

Docket (government policy and law updates)

Provider Status Report (front-line reports)

Part D

APhA Works (APhA initiatives)

LMP Editorial

CE—Abstraction with downloadable story?

Ad Index

Monthly OTC Survey—IBC augmented with analysis or facts