Healthcare Certification

Why get LegitScript-certified? Abraham "Bob" Bobo (RPh), Eli Bobo, and Ankit Patel explain why they certified their brick-and-mortar pharmacy and compounding lab.

Davis Islands Pharmacy & Compounding Lab is a state-of-the-art compounding pharmacy, creating tailored medications for patients in its in-store compounding lab. Serving the Tampa, Florida, community since 1949, Davis Islands Pharmacy is an independently owned and operated drugstore with a focus on quality and compassionate care and superior customer service.

The pharmacy began looking for ways to expand its business while also meeting the needs of longtime customers, some of whom take advantage of online fulfillment. In order to grow the business beyond customers who live nearby, Davis Islands began expanding its footprint to new states in which they can fill prescriptions and deliver medications legally.

To adequately serve this new customer demographic, they realized they would need to offer end-to-end prescription fulfillment online to a different segment of customers relative to those they have been serving for decades. Their effort includes more digital infrastructure, online advertising, and other digital tactics capable of capturing and nurturing prospects, and ultimately retaining them — while still focusing on enhancing the services they provide to walk-in customers. This new push into the online space brought them to LegitScript, and helped them understand the importance of certification in maximizing their online exposure.

In the following Q&A, Bobo, Bobo, and Patel talk about LegitScript Certification, and why it is valuable for retail pharmacies and healthcare providers that have an online presence.

What prompted your interest in getting LegitScript-certified?

We initially wanted to test out digital advertising on Google and Facebook, but ran into issues buying our own branded keywords. Because our business name has the word "pharmacy" in it, we were extremely limited in the ways we were able to promote our local business online because of keyword restrictions.

We were clearly a legitimate retail pharmacy with limited online features (and no e-commerce at the time), so we couldn't understand why we would qualify as an "online pharmacy." After conducting a lot of research into why we were blocked from running ads, we discovered that due to recent lawsuits and the bad actors in the industry trying to advertise illegal products and services, platforms like Facebook and Google have become more stringent in who is allowed to advertise in the pharmacy space.

What is the brick-and-mortar pharmacy market like in your area?

The brick-and-mortar pharmacy market is rife with competition in Tampa, both in retail and online realms. There is competition, not only with the big-chain drug stores that offer competitive pricing, the convenience of stores around every corner, and highly sophisticated customer retention programs; but also among independent pharmacies, with whom we compete on customer service. The quickest and easiest way to reach new prospects is through digital advertising.

How long have you been offering prescription fulfillment online?

We've been offering prescription refills online and through a mobile app for about two years. We haven't, however, been using digital channels to drive new patient revenue. We notice our existing customer base is not the most technologically savvy, and our staff is very prompt when it comes to answering phones and responding to patient inquiries.

We sometimes struggle to justify online prescription fulfillment with respect to existing customers. But we have certain loyal customers that like to refill their prescriptions online — and to us that added convenience is worth it. As we expand and our customer base grows, we anticipate more refills to be submitted online.

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What was the certification process like for you?

The certification process was easy once we got started. We were able to pull together the required documents, proof of business, DBA, and answer the questions in a couple days. After looking through the requirements under Google's Advertising Policies, we were initially confused with regard to which of the program options was most appropriate for our needs. We were able to identify, with the help of the LegitScript team, that we would either need LegitScript Certification, or the .pharmacy program. LegitScript, in our opinion, helped us weigh the pros and cons of each program in a fair manner. To us it came down to the cost/benefit of owning a .pharmacy domain, and we determined it was not necessary for us to purchase.

Customer service was great. From our first informational call in which we unloaded our initial questions, all the way through the certification review, the process was transparent and communication was prompt, with all questions answered within a day or two. As soon as we had a URL on LegitScript verifying our certification, getting approved through Google happened nearly instantaneously — even before the seal was added to our website.

Will LegitScript Certification help customers feel you are trustworthy?

Trust marks are always an influential factor in the consumer's evaluation of online legitimacy. I'm not sure the consumer is always aware of the exact reasons for certification, but it undoubtedly looks good and provides real-time verification for anyone with concerns. Because LegitScript and similar certifications are mandatory, consumers are increasingly less likely to come into contact with as many of the bad actors online, and will over time become more trusting of companies advertising in the space.

Do you think certification will help your business stand out?

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Our costs per click locally are relatively low, and as we build out our search engine marketing campaigns and fine-tune the keywords to trigger our ads, I anticipate our return on investment will increase, and costs will decrease further.

The mere fact that we're able to run campaigns in what appears to many to be a high-barrier industry while our local competition is not, puts us at a tremendous advantage. We are currently able to show ads on the top of Google for all our major keywords — and are in the process of building out pages and forms on our website to send traffic for the hundreds, if not thousands, of long tail keywords nobody else is currently targeting locally.

Any advice for other companies considering LegitScript Certification?

By design, the process is straightforward if your business is legitimate. The aim of certification programs like LegitScript is transparency in the industry, so if you tried to hide the registrant of your domain name, you'll have to make that information public. If your DBA has expired, you'll have to renew that. But these are all things that are both good for your business and good for the industry as a whole.

I think in the near future, certification through a program like LegitScript will essentially be table stakes for pharmacies with their eyes on growth, as it opens you up to all the paid channels to advertise your business and services. Certification also allows you to take credit cards over the phone, all of which enables you to grow in whatever direction you think is most profitable and effective for your brand.

The team at LegitScript was a pleasure to work with, and I imagine they will roll out additional benefits to getting certified through them that we'll be able to take advantage of.

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