

## With prescriptions, SMP Pharmacy Solutions delivers

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SMP Pharmacy Solutions, a South Miami-based independent pharmacy, expects to grow business nearly 200 percent this year, largely by employing a business tactic many think disappeared with doctors who made house calls.

SMP delivers medicine to customers' homes, a service President **Armando Bardisa** acknowledges most pharmacies ceased offering decades ago. Nevertheless, he says home deliveries will continue to be the primary driver of the company's growth.



Armando Bardisa

**Home delivery was not a service you offered when you founded the business in 2003?** No, although when I started out, I knew I wanted to deliver highly personalized customer service. I did not want to open the so-called mom-and-pop store, so the plan was to open several brick-and-mortar locations throughout Florida, and that strategy would drive our growth.

However, after opening a second location, we discovered that we lost a lot of the synergies between our managers and their teams. We realized that, instead of opening more stores, we could build up a delivery service and keep all of our managers under one roof. So we pivoted and pursued a plan to expand our delivery radius.

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**Do you credit that decision as the key to your success?** Absolutely. We have just over 100 employees today, and we plan to double our staff and our revenue in 2016. The strategy has worked well for us so far. 2015 marked our seventh consecutive year on *Inc.*'s list of 5,000 fastest-growing private companies, *J.D. Power & Associates* awarded us with its "Highest in Customer Satisfaction" rating, and we recently opened a state-of-the-art facility that will house our fertility and compounding divisions.

**What services does the compounding division offer?** That is another key competitive differentiator for us. Compounding used to be very common, but fell out of practice after the industry consolidated in the 1930s because it requires such a high level of personalized customer service. For instance, a doctor may prescribe a 10-milligram dose of a blood pressure medication, but later determine a higher dose is necessary. But then the patient starts taking a 20-milligram dose and experiences unpleasant side effects. In a case like that, we will work with the doctor and patient to determine that the best dose may be 17 milligrams, and will create – or compound – those pills in our lab.

**How else does SMP's customer service differ from its competitors' services?** Typically, when a patient drops off a prescription at a pharmacy, it either gets filled or not, depending on the insurance company's approval process. That's where the pharmacy's involvement in the process stops, leaving the patient and doctor to figure out what to do next.

We follow through to make sure all our customers get the medicines they need. If the initial prescription is not covered by insurance, we work with the physician and his or her staff to determine what other medications exist that meet the patient's needs and insurance company's requirements.

Our Easy Meds Sync Program ensures they receive all refills on time, and that they take their medications on the strict schedules set by their doctors.

**Is it unusual for patients to not take medications on a dosage and schedule set by their doctors?** Not at all. In fact, a top driver of hospitalizations is noncompliance with medication schedules. A number of diseases or medical conditions, like high blood pressure, have no warning signs or side effects before something serious happens, like a stroke. The patient feels fine, lets the medication schedule lapse, and that leads to serious complications.

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**What do you anticipate your top challenges will be in 2016?** Referrals from our customers and their physicians are critical to our growth. Building that word-of-mouth network requires our field reps to regularly attend networking events and visit physicians' offices to meet with doctors and their staff members in person. Even in this age of video conference calls and social media platforms, the best way to build relationships remains the face-to-face meeting.

Another key challenge will be hiring quickly enough to match our growth. We have a rigorous interview process and try to hire the best available staff members. We work with my alma mater, Nova Southeastern University, to bring pharmacy students in so they can work side-by-side with our pharmacists.

But we don't want to let business growth interfere with our commitment to serving our communities. We have raised a lot of money and devoted countless volunteer hours to helping the indigent families in Homestead, [St. Jude Children's Research Hospital](#), and to finding a cure for cerebral palsy. As the saying goes: "For those that much is given, much is expected."

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