



Caught in Awkward Silence?

atd \$19.50



Stimulate learner participation with these tips for asking better questions.

Renewing Passion

Kroger Health offers a holistic approach to the associate experience.

BY LAURA RANEY



The Company:

Kroger Health
krogerhealth.com



The Supplier:

TiER1 Performance
tier1performance.com

At a time when the world was facing a pandemic, the Great Resignation, unprecedented turnover, and increasing burnout in the healthcare industry, the Kroger Health team continued to ask how to better care for its workforce and specifically pharmacists. Kroger Health—the healthcare division of the Kroger Company—and the Kroger Family of Pharmacies and clinics operate more than 2,200 pharmacies and 226 clinics in 35 states, serving more than 17 million customers annually. The organization’s team of 24,000 healthcare practitioners, including pharmacists, nurse practitioners, dietitians, and technicians, believe in practicing at the top of their licenses, enabling “food as medicine” to help prevent disease before it starts, and helping people live healthier lives.

Kroger Health believes in providing its associates with the ingredients they need to create their own recipe for success at work and in life. That means focusing on the value and care the organization provides and the growth opportunities it makes available to them. More than increasing retention and evolving the customer experience, it wants to reignite the passion that motivates all staff to provide best-in-class patient care.

That unwavering commitment to feeding the human spirit inspired the company to develop Project Passion. Kroger Health worked with consulting partner TiER1 Performance to create a 12-week experience focused on providing pharmacy teams with a springboard to explore their passion for serving patients, leading high-performing teams, and fostering a pharmacy culture that embodies the organization’s mission and vision.

Discovery

To equip associates for success and create real cultural change, we believed the solution would need to be broader than training alone. Although we had theories about how to address the challenges, we knew we could generate the best solution and increase associate adoption by putting associates at the center.

The discovery process focused on exploring pharmacy associates’ experiences. We reviewed existing organizational and industry data to identify trends and opportunities in the work environment. We also conducted a diverse set of virtual interviews, spoke with patients, and visited the Kroger Family of Pharmacies across six states.

Our long-term cultural change lens yielded many findings. As we started on our journey to determine how pharmacy associates defined “passion” for their work, we learned passion is the result of many factors, including societal environment (including a pandemic), systems and processes, impact, and workload. For any organization, those factors can serve as barriers to passion. Staffing shortages often meant pharmacy teams were feeling overworked and underappreciated.

Prioritizing needs

Grounded in clearly defined upfront needs, we found dozens of opportunities to move beyond typical training and development. For example, we considered how we could encourage associate well-being and foster authentic, friendly patient interactions. To focus our work, we used the Jobs-to-be-Done framework, which develops products based on understanding both a specific

goal and the thought processes that lead to product completion. With that tool, we prioritized five key pharmacist needs:

- Help me to feel seen, heard, and recognized for my work with patients.
- Help me build awareness for the ways Kroger has, and is, supporting me.
- Help me to feel less isolated as a professional.
- Help me to develop myself as a pharmacist and a leader.
- Help me sustain changes for myself, my team, and my pharmacy.

A holistic experience

The process of designing a solution for those needs involved brainstorming and collaboration in several virtual and in-person design sessions, mapping an initial experience draft, developing prototypes of solution assets, as well as testing and iterating ideas through user testing and focus groups. What resulted was an experience for pharmacists and their teams that



We considered how we could encourage associate well-being and foster authentic, friendly patient interactions.

incorporated a blend of modalities, activities, and touchpoints throughout a three-month period and beyond, including:

- Traditional training and development components (leadership development sessions and microlearning modules)
- Intentional community and culture building (in-person events in addition to a cultural toolkit and discussion guide for pharmacy teams)
- Vision articulation and communication (videos, electronic communications, and print pieces to define the future of Kroger Health and the pharmacy's role in it)

- Materials targeted at burnout and well-being (a care package, reflection tools, and mental health resources)
- Operational changes focused on easing workload (scheduled lunch breaks, expanded centralized facilities, and additional automation technologies)
- Sustained changes to ways of working (team huddles and ongoing development opportunities)

The pilot and rollout

We initially piloted Project Passion in six of the Kroger Family of Pharmacies' 19 divisions, which resulted in promising outcomes and provided the opportunity for improvements and iterations for the remaining rollout. Anecdotally, pharmacists shared that after completing the program, they were "full of energy" and were "thinking about different things with a more open mindset." In year-over-year annual survey data, pilot divisions overall outpaced the rest of the organization in perceptions of factors such as being a great place to work and seeing positive change. Improvements will continue as we launch Project Passion in our remaining divisions and begin dreaming about what Project Passion 2.0 looks like.

Project Passion reminds us that creating an amazing experience for customers and communities means finding new ways to engage the dynamic teams that bring our culture to life, ensuring associates are in touch with the things that make them feel inspired and empowered at work every day. Kroger Health has uncovered a significant opportunity for employers to address employee burnout and retention while reigniting the passion for their profession and those they serve. To do so effectively, look through a holistic lens of discovering and prioritizing needs to design cohesive experiences beyond training that enhance culture, support growth and development, and ultimately create a significant employee experience.

Laura Raney is the national health and wellness director for Kroger Health; laura.raney@kroger.com.



Knowing Doesn't Equate to Doing

Kroger and TiER1 Performance are believers that knowing doesn't equate to doing when it comes to supporting associates. It's why they both incorporate elements of experience design—using the power of experiences to shift mindsets—into their solutions.

Experience design considers the whole person and how to affect thoughts and emotions in a way that creates sustainable, new behaviors that get results. Whether in Kroger's results heartbeat (which summarizes the belief that experiences help transform mindsets, leading to actions and results) or the performance experience chain (the idea that customer service can most directly be affected by first creating a meaningful associate experience), the organization weaved elements of experience design throughout Project Passion.

Taking a holistic approach to the overall performance experience is a critical element to moving beyond communication and training and creating an environment that brings the desired outcomes to life. Find out more about experience design and how to begin incorporating it into your solutions at tier1performance.com/what-is-performance-experience-design.