Workplace Woes in Pharmacy

A 4-part video presentation addressing your questions about workplace problems
DISCLOSURES

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report no conflicts of interest and have nothing
to disclose with regard to the content of this
continuing education activity
WARNING

Warning: This continuing education activity is based on pharmacy staff’s real-world experiences (which may be unsuitable for children to see); may contain unusual humor; and describes some deplorable behaviors (which may be disturbing).

Viewer discretion advised
Objectives

• LIST ways to deal with difficult managers who micromanage, are hostile, or lack supervisory skills
• DETERMINE approaches to deal with coworkers whose skills, competencies, and teamwork abilities need improvement
• LIST several ways to improve one’s own skill set and career plan
• RECALL strategies to deal with poor healthcare literacy; “non-customers”; angry or abusive patients; and patients whose expectations have been disappointed
AGENDA

• Part 1: The Boss
• Part 2: Your coworkers
• Part 3: You
• Part 4: Patients

• To receive credit for this activity, you must complete the four 30 minute sessions, take the posttest, and evaluate the program
Workplace Woes in Pharmacy

Everybody Loves to Complain about the Boss!
Faculty Slide

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Question #1

I work in a pharmacy where micro-managing directors/supervisors are the rule, not the exception. If we suggest new ways of doing this, they treat us like rabble-rousers rather than innovators. Morale is really bad.

Any tips for dealing with this kind of management style?
This is a basic overview of micromanaging. It's provided here for people who may not be familiar with the idea of micromanaging. Most of us encounter several people throughout our careers who are micromanagers, and our next slide will talk about some of the symptoms of micromanagement. They tend to micromanage for one of three reasons: fear of failure, the need for performance, or lack of training.
Micromanaging Basics

Micromanagers tends to

• Resist delegating work
• Immerse themselves in the work assigned to others
• Look at the detail instead of the big picture
• Discourage others from making decisions
• Get involved in others’ work without asking them
• Monitor what’s least important and expect regular reports on miscellany
• Discount colleagues’ experience and knowledge
• Discourage loyalty and commitment
• Focus on the wrong priorities
• De-motivate teams

Employees can take a four-step approach when they work for or with micromanagers.

1. Assess your own behavior. Are you doing something that causes concern for your manager? Are you completely present when you’re at work, paying attention to what needs to be done? Are you respectful to your manager and to others?

2. Understand your manager and his or her point of view. In many pharmacies, managers are under incredible pressure to produce results. and many pharmacists are promoted to managerial positions very quickly, before they have the necessary skills. This is especially true in larger organizations because as organizations get larger, they become less flexible and less nimble. Managers often struggle to deal with policies and procedures for absolutely everything—policies that eliminate any creativity. Understanding the manager’s struggles can help you become part of the team and can also help you set goals with your manager for your department. Pursuing a common goal will help build trust and this will give you more freedom. It’s also important to plan ahead and minimize surprises. Micromanagers deal with surprises poorly.

3. Challenge your manager. Insist on having regular 1:1 supervision sessions and at these meetings ask for assignments that help meet pharmacy goals. If you come to an agreement about how a project will be handled, and your manager steps in and starts to micromanage, call him or her on it. Discuss what you agreed on respectfully and directly.

4. Communicate frequently. Good communication and results are the best ways to deal with the micromanager. Update your manager as often as you can, and anticipate your manager’s criticisms – after working with someone for a while, you tend to know what they will focus on. Plan your responses.

And one last tip: If there is someone in your organization who works well with management, observe that person. What does he or she seem to do that keeps the micromanager at bay? But a caveat here: don’t expect too much — even if they change, sooner or later many micromanagers revert to type. Sometimes it’s you who has to move on!
I agree with Jeannette. Leaders who micromanage and do everyone’s job including their own fail. In the book *The Goal* by Eliyahu Goldratt, the theory of constraints is described. If an army regiment can walk five miles/hour but the leader can only walk three, the regiment will only cover three miles of terrain each hour. Adding extra soldiers that can walk seven miles an hour will not change that. The micromanaging leader is the bottleneck to progress on multiple fronts. On this slide look at the two containers which each contain the same amount of liquid. When it is turned over, which one is optimal for producing output, in this case creating a drenched floor? The jar, of course! It doesn’t have the bottleneck.

Leaders should be innately incentivized to not micromanage because it hinders morale and workers’ production and their own as well. That doesn’t mean that it doesn’t happen all the time, just that the fundamentals for breaking through this paradigm are sound. So the question is how you, as a worker, can help the leadership feel comfortable listening to your input into solutions and into giving you greater autonomy? Talk with the leader about your commitment to the team and to the success of the leader. Some leaders are nervous about being unneeded or about being replaced so if they trust you are doing it to be helpful, not for a coup, they will be more receptive. Discuss how allowing the employees to make some small decisions autonomously can save the leader time for more executive functions which will benefit the unit and raise their visibility in the organization. For example, “Amanda, you are the only person who has access to the executive suite and we need you there to represent us. Why would you want to be intimately involved in the color scheme for the poster at ASHP when Ahmed has already done 10 posters in the past?” Share the vision where over time, if you can successfully make these small decisions, you can incrementally get more autonomy in the future. There can be explicit bounds put on when a decision can be made and when the employee needs insight from the leader.

In addition, leaders are more likely to allow things to be piloted than permanently implemented. So if you can identify an issue and possible solution, ask for a change for a few weeks, and then report back as part of a CQI process instead of asking for a permanent change.

However, it should be noted that sometime possible solutions from employees seem feasible but are not actually possible. If the leadership is unwilling to implement an employee proposed solution, it is ok to ask for more information so you can understand where the disconnect is. Just ask the question so the leader knows you are doing it to propose better solutions in the future, not to second guess the boss. So this discussion has to come about because you are curious and not furious.

Books like *The One Minute Manager*, and *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey* by Ken Blanchard are quick reads that can help leaders see the value in loosening the bottleneck. Loaning them your copy can be invaluable because now it is some “expert” somewhere else telling them, not you.
Question #2

At my pharmacy chain, my supervisor has trouble communicating to the entire staff uniformly (some people get updates, some don’t if they weren’t scheduled at time of change). It’s really annoying to be scolded for doing something “wrong” when no one told you that the policy changed.

How can I handle this? It makes me really angry!!!
Supervisors can’t do everything. They—like you—have strengths and limitations. Here’s something that you may not be aware of: sometimes, you need to “manage up.” It’s a 3-step process:

First, try to understand the reasons for your boss’ behavior, be it this communication problem or ANY difficult or unproductive behavior. Assuming your boss generally behaves fairly reasonably and that his/her difficult behavior seems to be a result of stress overload rather than his/her character, chances are good you can influence behavior modification. (If your boss’ behavior seems to reflect a chronically hostile, abusive style of interacting regardless of the amount of stress in the worksite, it’s less likely that he or she will change the behavior.)

Second, manage your own negative emotions regarding his/her behavior so that you do not engage in self-defeating behavior (e.g., stonewalling or counter-attacking your boss). You’re angry, but can you put that aside and think not about your anger, but about the problem and its roots?

Third, once you understand and manage your own negative reactions, work to communicate your issues/concerns — framed in a helpful, positive manner — creating an atmosphere for problem resolution. Can you think of two solutions for the problem at hand, and present them to your boss calmly and rationally?

In this specific case, your boss is having trouble communicating change to everyone uniformly.
Successful organizations have a positive culture that is PAST: proactive, accountable, supportive, and transparent. Is this communication issue a personality issue, a process issue, a workload issue, or a combination of the three? If it negatively impacts the supportive nature of your unit’s performance, it needs to be addressed. I suspect that the supervisor wants to do a good job, wants to be successful, and wants you to be successful, but doesn’t appreciate that changing a policy or procedure doesn’t permeate through the organization organically and a new process for communicating changes broadly is needed. In light of this, here are some things that you can do. If you, or a group of you, are going to go to your boss, follow the CANDID approach recommended in the book *How to Tell Anyone Anything* by Richard Gallagher.

First the “C,” compartmentalize the message into pieces and start out the discussion in a neutral instead of an emotionally charged way. In this case, avoid starting out with “I hate that you can’t be bothered to tell us about new policies when they come out until we violate them and get slammed.” Start with, “I notice that we don’t have a good way to communicate policy changes to people working second or third shift.”

Then the “A,” ask questions. Steve Covey from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* says we should first seek to understand and then be understood or what I call being “curious, not furious.” So ask, “How do you think people on these later shifts would know in our current process that a new policy was introduced?” Ask other questions that you need to know here as well. “I notice that you are still doing most of your regular job and also trying to manage all of us, is that overwhelming?”

Then move to “N” which is to normalize. Here you don’t say the action you disagree with is OK, just that you can see how it could be normal. “I can see how your being so busy makes it difficult for you to communicate these changes out to everyone.” Or, “I can see how having three shifts per day and four hospitals can make disseminating information out challenging.”

Now you are ready for “D,” discussing the issue. By setting the table, your boss won’t be feeling personally attacked at this stage. “I know it is challenging for you, but I feel when I am called out for a policy change that I had no way of knowing about that it is setting me up for failure.” “I want to come up with a solution that doesn’t overburden you but keeps us all informed.”

After this stage you ready for “I” incentivize. Can you do anything to make the solution easier to implement? “I can help set up a listserv (or group text) with all the employees in it so that you can just send a text and refer people to the new policy and the page number it can be found in the policy and procedure guide.” Or, “I can get together with the other staff and brainstorm some solutions that we can share with you.”

Finally, you are ready for the last “D,” disengage where you say, “Thank you for listening to my concerns, I look forward to working through this with you.” And transition politely. Say something like, “Now, have you been to the new restaurant in town?” Do you see what you were able to do there? You were proactive, you sought first to understand before being understood, and you were looking for win-win solutions. This is an empowering conversation that will build your trust and credibility in the organization.
Question #3

That last question struck a chord with me. My boss is chronically hostile and really abusive. For example:

- If I bring any kind of work problem to him, he glares at me and sneers, “That seems like a personal problem. What do you want me to do about it?”

- He’s a big fan of NCIS, and he constantly calls me “Probie.” He tried to slap the back of my head once like Gibbs slaps DiNozzo, but I’m sure my look of horror and recoil stopped that.

- When he points out an error or a problem and I try to talk, he says, “My job is to talk. Your job is to shut up and listen.” Is this just the way some people communicate?
I am so sorry you find yourself in this situation. It has to be rough. In the book *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, Angela Duckworth contends that leaders fall into one of four quadrants. These quadrants are divided based on whether the leader has high or low expectations and whether the boss has a high or low degree of caring about the employees. Those with high expectations and no empathy or sympathy are TYRANTS and this leads to low morale and high turnover. People who aspire to lead are sometimes drawn to leadership as a way to dominate or lord over others. Initially, people work harder when forced to work for a tyrant but managers get short-term production increases at the expense of long-term production capacity when people burn out. People will also show no loyalty for the tyrant or do things to cover for the tyrants weaknesses. Over the long term, the tyrants destroy the unit and themselves. However, if no one does anything to stymie the tyrant, many people suffer. I don’t think that whether or not someone is a tyrant has to do with their y- or x-chromosome, I have seen and heard about several double x-chromosome tyrants in my day. The big question is what you do when you are working for a tyrant? One key is to document. Document the instances where bullying behavior happened with details regarding the situation. If it isn’t documented, it didn’t happen. It is important to identify whether the bullying behavior is just being directed at you or is directed at others in the group. If those being bullied are all women, all people of color, or all older employees then this gives insights into motives which can be helpful. There are many places you can go with your complaints including to your boss, your bosses boss, human resources, tip line, your union representative, the comments section of the anonymous employee survey, or ombudsman/mediator.

If it is an act of harassment and not just bullying behavior, you need to go to the human resources department and file a formal complaint. This then makes it very difficult to have your boss retaliate against you because you complained. There are federal legal protections for whistleblowers. Hitting you would of course be harassment, and not just bullying. In other cases, the right person to go to depends on the situation. If the boss is doing something that is making you feel uncomfortable but is otherwise trying to be a positive leader, that person might just not know that this is bothering you. They might think it is funny while you feel it is demeaning, or they might be under the assumption that being bossy is the only way to be the boss. Following the CANDID approach to giving difficult feedback might be helpful here. In this situation, it seems like going to your boss will not be productive and could lead to further bullying behavior. So figure out as best as you can who would be the most receptive person to approach and whether you want to remain anonymous or come forward. When you do come forward, have that documentation in order and be honest. It is tempting to add extra fluff or to exaggerate the situation but this is rarely a good idea. Once an investigation is undertaken, if your story can be proven to be false, even just in an instance or two, it is much harder to get the benefit of the doubt for the rest of it. If there are things that you did incorrectly that led to an over-exaggerated response, be honest about the infraction so that it doesn’t come out later and weaken your assertions.
Jeannette Wick chimed in and said, “Wow. What’s the turnover like at your pharmacy? I wonder if he thinks he’s funny.”

Attempt to discuss your concerns in a non-adversarial way. Try to handle your complaints in a manner that does not do further damage to your relationship.

This may be bullying or harassment. There are no laws against workplace bullying, by the way, but there are laws about harassment. Harassment takes many forms. Making inappropriate and offensive comments or jokes is one example. Physical harassment is another issue in some workplaces, so if he ever slaps the back of your head, you have grounds to complain or even sue. This can include any type of touch that someone doesn’t want, including pushing and groping. Unwanted sexual advances also fall into this category. All of these harassment issues make the victim feel unsafe at work.

In fact, you may want to consider seeking counsel from a trusted mentor or human resources professional to evaluate your options. Try not to react emotionally or defensively.
Bullying is perpetrated by insecure people — of all sexes, ages, races and faiths — against people they consider a threat to their success and status. Bullies tend to go with whatever weapon, subtle or overt, seems most effective: physical intimidation, rumors, verbal abuse, ostracism.

But you and like-minded colleagues can make your environment inhospitable to bullying. Offer colleagues (even the “mean” ones) friendly words, help and kudos for their achievements. When someone pitches trash talk, bunt it away with a change of subject or a kind word about the intended target. When someone is rude to you, respond as you see fit: Shrug it off, crack a joke, or play it straight and explain, as though you have no idea what was intended, that you found that comment hurtful.

Unfortunately, defeating workplace bullying depends largely on the employer’s willingness to address the problem — unlikely if the top brass supports or fears the ringleaders. But the warmer and more supportive your environment is, the more bullies will be exposed as outliers, and the more leverage you and your coalition will have if you need to escalate the matter.

**PRO TIP:** The [Workplace Bullying Institute](http://www.workplacebullying.org) offers research, coaching and other resources for identifying and combating such bullying.
Question #4

I have the opposite problem. My supervisor was promoted from within, mainly because he was easy to work with and everyone liked him I think. Really, my coworker Sarah should have gotten the job. But he still wants to be everyone’s friend. He’s always bringing in little gifts for everyone, wants everyone to go out for drinks after work, invites people to parties at his house, and he never wants to correct anyone for anything. All the stuff that people don’t want or like to do is piling up, the pharmacy is a pigsty, and everyone’s unhappy. He hasn’t filled the position he vacated, so we’re all doing more work. And he’s talking about hiring one of his friends from school who has a bad reputation. We’ve cut back on our social events because we just don’t want to deal with him outside of work.
People think that the tyrant is the only person who can create a toxic work environment but that is untrue. In the book *Grit: The Power of Perseverance*, Angela Duckworth contends that leaders fall into one of four quadrants. These quadrants are divided based on whether the leader has high or low expectations and whether the boss has a high or low degree of caring about the employees. People with low expectations and a high degree of caring about employees are cheerleaders, not leaders. People with low expectations and no caring are neglectful. It sounds to me like the boss falls under the box of cheerleader. In both cases, the people who care about doing well are not appreciated for going above and beyond while those who goof off are not penalized. This creates uncar, unmotivated, and unhappy employees over time and destroys the unit and the leader. When there are no incentives for doing the right thing and no disincentives for mediocrity, you get mediocrity. This is why over and over again, communism hasn’t worked because it neglects basic human nature. In the Gallup Survey of the factors that determine positive retention and productivity of employees, one of the factors was whether your co-workers were committed to doing quality work.

Like with the tyrant, the big question here is what can you do about it? In this situation, it sounds like your new boss needs some leadership training or coaching. The boss seems to care but just doesn’t know how to stop being a friend and to start being a leader. It may ultimately be that the leader was chosen from within because there was not enough money to hire another person and now the leader is doing two jobs instead of one. The boss might not even have wanted to be the leader but was stepping up because he cares about the people and the unit. So now the leader is undertrained, overworked, and underappreciated. If this is the case, you might try to approach the boss individually or as a group and use a non-confrontational approach to discuss your feelings and the impact that the lack of accountability among all the employees is having on the unit. The CANDID approach can be especially helpful here to keep the focus on the actions that can make things better and not a condemnation of the person. It can also bring the unit together as you brainstorm together ways to make due with fewer employees, to reduce redundancy in functions, and those kinds of things. It could be a wonderfully empowering place to be.

If this is unsuccessful, then going to your boss’s boss and explaining the situation can be helpful. Again, go in with the understanding that you care about the unit, that you feel that your boss is a nice guy and deserves a chance to succeed with some additional training or coaching, but that continuing along this path might irreparably injure the unit. The best approach to dealing with issues like this is to be proactive and focus on trying to make the situation better, not trying to drag the leader down.

Just for the record, leaders should strive to have high standards and to create a culture of caring for their employees. This ensures that people are working hard so production is attained in the short-term and that people are allowed to grow and develop over time so that production capacity will grow. If you are not producing and people are not working hard, your entire unit is vulnerable. You are vulnerable to being outsourced, to being under resourced, to being isolated or to being eliminated altogether. Everyone needs to understand that it is their duty to work hard and to work well with their co-workers to manage your own destiny. However, sometimes people will need to understand that others are going through a hard time and pick up the slack but in return, the unit will be there to help them in their time of need.
Oh geesh, AWKWARD!!!
Your former peer turned boss's promotion highlights two common challenges with peer promotions: **rapid re-contracting** followed by **rapid restructuring**.

Re-contracting relationship ground rules is necessary, because in the aftermath of a promotion social and hierarchical relationship dynamics will inevitably shift. Peers can joke around, gossip, gripe, and poke fun at each other. But when one of those peers is promoted, these behaviors need to be tempered. The former peer is now responsible for setting direction, handing out assignments, holding people to deadlines, assessing performance, and determining pay. Yes, he can still be friendly with his now-subordinates, but only to a point. He or she needs to create some distance so that the new boss can give feedback and make decisions that the former peers might not agree with. To do this, the new boss needs to re-contract relationship rules with each team member; and employees who can’t accept the new contract need to go elsewhere.

Is Sarah—who is both a peer and a competitor—making the re-contracting process more difficult? If so, the new boss and Sarah need to be the first people to clarify their relationship.

New managers often have to bring in some different people and/or redistribute responsibilities. They replace the themselves (to fill the position they vacated). Other open positions come from people who leave as a result of the re-contracting, which would be the case if Sarah decides to look elsewhere. The challenge here is to not necessarily replace each position individually, but rather to look holistically at the work, figure out the best way to match it with the skills of the remaining team members, and then see what gaps are left. Restructuring in this way brings people into the team who were not part of the old relationship patterns. More importantly, it provides promotions for the veterans on the team, if not to new titles then at least to new responsibilities or challenges. This too will create new relationship patterns that make it easier to let go of the past.

In your case, the problem is that your boss doesn’t seem to understand that it’s time to grow up, get going, and produce results. Someone—maybe a couple of someone’s—needs to talk to your boss. It’s probably best coming from the coworkers he was closest to before the promotion. They need to cover a few points:

**Everyone need new and clear boundaries**

• Chummy coworkers chat and gripe after hours; that’s off limits now
• He’s got to work with the group to establish some work priorities and rules
• He needs to set expectation that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-tagged) for everyone
• He needs to see how his current approach is not working
• He probably needs to develop a new and different social circle—he can still be friends with all of you, but it needs to be a more measured, circumspect kind of friendship.
Question #5

I have trouble balancing the demands of accurately interpreting, counseling, and filling prescriptions with corporate demands of "practice metrics." What are my rights as a practicing pharmacist trying to fulfill my professional, legal, and ethical obligations to the patient when my employer does not provide the support needed to do my job safely?
CBS Boston recently reported on the possibility that performance metrics contribute to pharmacy errors. So what are performance metrics? They are part of a performance system used by pharmacies to measure how many prescriptions a pharmacist fills and how fast he or she does it. The system also includes information about other pharmacist duties like flu shots and calling patients to get them to fill their prescriptions. These numbers are then used to judge the pharmacists’ performance. Pharmacy staff often find metrics nerve-wracking and stressful.

The Institute for Safe Medication Practices conducted a survey of nearly 700 pharmacists in which it asked them whether they believe performance metrics contribute to dispensing errors. A full 83% of the pharmacists responded that they believed it does.
ISMP hears you!

- Large study (N=673)
- 49% of the pharmacists said they are penalized if they don’t meet advertised time guarantee expectations
- Often is due to conflicting duties including
  - Adjudicating insurance issues (87%)
  - Encountering prescription volumes that exceed resources (77%)
  - Clarifying the prescription with the prescriber (77%)
  - Providing patients with information or other services such as immunizations (61%)
- Twenty-three percent said they were incentivized through salary bonuses for meeting the time guarantees

Directly from ISMP

- Incentives for perfect performance and punishment for imperfect performance results in underreporting of errors, practice barriers, and risks.
- This is a significant threat to patient safety because unreported errors, barriers, and risks perpetuate the conditions that lead to adverse patient outcomes.
- If patients are rewarded when time guarantees are not met, it sets the tone for an adversarial relationship between the pharmacist and the patient, when a collaborative relationship is needed to promote safety.

The Model State Pharmacy Act and Model Rules of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (Model Act), provides model language for developing state laws or board rules, was amended to address performance metrics.

NABP Concurs

- The Board of Pharmacy may refuse to issue or renew, or may Revoke, Summarily Suspend, Suspend, place on Probation, Censure, Reprimand, issue a Warning against, or issue a Cease and Desist order against, the licenses or the registration of, or assess a Fine/Civil Penalty or Costs/Administrative Costs against any Person Pursuant to the procedures set forth in Section 403 herein below, upon one or more of the following grounds:
  - requiring Pharmacy personnel to meet production and/or performance metrics and/or quotas that negatively impact patient safety.
The previous several slides reviewed the findings from the ISMP study, and the fact that the NABP concurs that metrics can be dangerous if employed poorly.

It's only fair to mention that performance metrics have advantages and disadvantages. This slide list the advantages, and we hasten to point out that metrics can help you focus on areas where you need to improve. They can also help you benchmark (compare your work with others in similar situations).

However, metrics can focus your attention on one aspect of your performance to the exclusion of all others, and metrics can be faulty if unanticipated events occur for example, if you use a metric that compares this week to the same week last year, and last year there was a huge snowstorm, you are comparing apples and oranges.

It's always important to remember what Albert Einstein said, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

So to finish up, the answer the question is that when metrics are interfering with your ability to provide good care to patients, it's time to talk to management about those metrics. Very recently a recent UConn grad contacted me to complain about a new metric used by one of the large chains. I asked her if she had notified management, and she had not. So I asked her to conduct a test and to send her comments through her management channel. Much to her surprise, management was very receptive to her comments and actually made changes. So speak up!
Question #6

Everyone is pressuring us to add clinical services. It’s a joke! How can we add clinical tasks into our workflow? We have all kinds of preexisting issues with workflow, including many different platforms to login to complete clinical claims.
Understanding your unit and its strengths and weaknesses with the ability to communicate it effectively is critical. If service expansion will cause people to burn out over time, that is short term benefit with long term loss of your best employees. If there is a way to do more by streamlining functions, clarifying roles, and reducing bottlenecks, you can enhance production and empower people which will increase production capacity in the future. Taking some time to go through the current processes and ask if it is needed or not, asking if there is a fix that can be implemented, or ask if you need to give some functions your “A” game or your “C” game is critical. When someone comes to you with a new service they want you to start but in your current paradigm would blow up and fail, it is ok to share your reality. Understand though that it sounds much better if you can offer solutions to break that paradigm.

“If I had an extra technician to free up Anisha in the IV room, she would have time to do more medication safety audits in the operating room.”

“I agree this committee assignment is important but I am spending too much time in meeting and not enough time working with my people. It is impeding the roll out of this new service and I am the only one who can train the staff. This other committee I am on seldom if ever have anything related to pharmacy. Could I come off that committee and go on this one instead? If they have a specific pharmacy issue, they can always email me.”

“Right now, all my people are going full out and something like this would burn them out. The main issue is that our Pyxis upgrade proposal has been stuck in the C-suite for over a year and it takes us so long to fill carts the old way. I wouldn’t feel comfortable agreeing to do this at this time.”

“Currently, every order is given the same priority so I have to have full staffing in the central pharmacy all the time. If we could use this stratification tool to identify what needs to go up immediately versus what can wait for a couple hours, it would give us so much more flexibility.”

Benchmarking is the key here. If you can show that other health-systems who are pulling this off are much larger, have lower census, or have much better technology, it is easier to show that you are providing reasons for the lack of success, not excuses.
Question #7

What’s the best way to deal with non-pharmacist managers?

and

A tech owns the pharmacy and is therefore my boss. She will not stand up to another pharmacist who gets away with a lot, but she’s very critical of my work. In all honesty, I’m more detailed oriented that the other pharmacist, and catch more safety issues.
Pharmacy owners, be they pharmacists, technicians, or non-science people all want satisfied customers and revenues exceeding expenses. Many owners also want to feel like they are making a difference in the patients health and the community. The non-pharmacist owner might have an altered sense of what it takes to be a competent pharmacist or lack a dedication to the professional obligations of a pharmacist. So regardless of who they are, if you are speaking the language of customer satisfaction and making money, your words are universal. If you are speaking about the other things, you may have to provide more context.

In this scenario, I cannot decide if:

1. Some additional context about the roles and responsibilities of the pharmacist would help the owner see how you are providing valuable services. It may not be apparent how your double checking for errors is helping revenue until you describe the implications of a medication error, both on the public relations and the litigation side.
2. Whether she is truly playing favorites because she likes the other pharmacist better or is intimidated by the other person. If she just likes the other person or just does not like you, that would be a game changer in your relationship and would probably mean that you should look for greener pastures elsewhere unless you can get the owner to identify a tangible deficiency that you have that you can overcome that would normalize your relationship.
3. The owner believes that you have more or more severe deficiencies than you have self-identified. Sometimes I have seen people who were unable to see the reality of what they were doing and how it was being perceived because they were caught up in their own self-narrative.

From these three possible scenarios, the only way you will know for sure is if you have the courage to ask and be willing to hear things that may make you uncomfortable. However, if you have the courage to do it, you could improve your work quality of life, understand how you can improve, or realize that this job will not be a blessing over the long term. Again, approach the discussion by being curious and not furious. Seek to understand from the owners perspective before trying to be understood so at the end you know that you were both able to be heard. If you do this, you will know where you stand and have the best chance of improving the situation that is bringing such trouble now.
Here, the speakers concluded by acknowledging the bosses or people, to who have the same strengths and limitations as all other people. Sometimes, it’s a matter of appreciating and individuals strengths and trying to work with them empathetically. Often, problems with chain of command emanate from a poor understanding of organizational goals. In any case, communication is critical.