Suppose you’re the marketing manager for a small or medium-sized credit union and want to broaden the reach of your message. But your budget is tight, especially compared to some of the banking behemoths in your region. What do you do?

For Noralynn Gudger, Marketing and Communications Manager of Champion Credit Union in Canton, NC, the answer lies in Open Your Eyes to a Credit Union®, Credit Union Awareness’s brand platform that connects consumers to credit unions.

Champion CU is a 27,000-member organization with branches in nine counties around Asheville in western North Carolina. “We have a small marketing team, and there’s no way we could have done the amount of research that was already done for Open Your Eyes and provided to us,” Noralynn says.

Although Open Your Eyes is a digital campaign, its research into market trends, consumer attitudes and effective messaging can be incorporated into all aspects of a credit union’s comprehensive marketing strategy. “This campaign adds value to what we are already doing,” Noralynn notes.

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**Top-Takeaways**

1. The Open Your Eyes to a Credit Union® campaign works seamlessly with campaigns the credit union is already deploying.

2. Contributors to the campaign gain access to a plethora of how-to training videos that range from utilizing local influencers to the best times to post on social media.

3. Employees are key to advancing the campaign locally.
The thread that runs through all of Champion’s marketing is the OYE Messaging Guide, a research-based compendium of talking points, slogans, images and “Do’s and Don’ts” of communicating to potential members without lapsing into jargon that doesn’t connect with consumers. “We were able to use these insights in so many of our marketing channels,” Noralynn says, “from collateral to print and to help our staff talk to interested customers.”

Champion’s marketing starts at the front door, where the credit union’s ATM screens sport a line from the Messaging Guide, “We make it simple and seamless.” While a transaction is being processed, the screen invites the member to explore the benefits of a credit union. Many nonmembers use the ATM, and the screen has frequently prompted them to walk into the branch to request more information or open accounts. Once inside, they are met by staff who have been trained in what to say, and what not to say, about credit union membership.

Attention-grabbing images are the mainstay of any marketing campaign, and Champion has made ample use of photography across multiple platforms.

The credit union’s use of bold and entertaining images comes “straight from the Credit Union Awareness research,” Noralynn says, which shows that people respond well to photos of children, fun families and animals - and to whimsy. One of the ways Champion used that research was to place an image of a lovable dog, wearing sunglasses and leaning out of a car window, on social media and streaming applications promoting auto loan refinancing.

Additionally, the credit union broadens its content by sharing Your Money Further posts that link to the national campaign’s website, YourMoneyFurther.com. This adds a national perspective to the credit

"This campaign adds value to what we are already doing."

—Noralynn Gudger, Marketing and Communications Manager

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**FAST FACTS**

**Credit Union:** Champion Credit Union  
**Location:** Canton, NC  
**Members:** 27,000  
**Asset Size:** $328 million  
**North Carolina Launched the campaign:** February 2019
union’s campaign by highlighting the strengths and advantages of credit unions, including thousands of fee-free ATMs across the country.

Often the most effective endorsements come from spokespeople outside the banking industry and well-known to the community. Champion engaged two radio personalities who host popular morning shows appealing to different audiences, country and top-40, to promote the advantages of banking at a credit union. As members of Champion CU, the hosts could speak from experience. Talking points drawn from the Messaging Guide and made available to the hosts, along with regular updates about activities and promotions at the credit union, helped the hosts develop daily one-minute “live reads” about Champion.

“I try not to script them because we want it to be natural,” Noralynn says, adding that the talking points from the Messaging Guide “really resonated with them.” Champion also runs a separate advertising campaign through the stations.

Empowering business owners and influencers in a community can be as simple as sharing the Credit Union Awareness Messaging Guide and providing talking points about credit unions. To help other participating credit unions identify local influencers and begin working with them, the campaign is posting how-to resource videos on its Your Money Further Facebook Community.

**Open Your Eyes begins with message development, but it doesn’t end there.**

Champion, like other participating credit unions, receives periodic updates about campaign performance, derived from national, regional, and state consumer research. Contributors also gets updates on advertising performance through quarterly calls with the Credit Union Awareness team, as well as access to an online state-level dashboard.

At Champion CU, the value added by Open Your Eyes can be seen in more positive consumer attitudes and staff’s improved ability to connect with members.

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**Note:** Access to campaign content is available to credit unions participating in Credit Union Awareness. For more information please email: awareness@cuna.coop.