Top-Takeaways

1. Taking advantage of the campaign’s creative assets can save you time and money, allowing you to quickly and easily develop attractive creative with research-backed messaging.

2. The Open Your Eyes to a Credit Union® campaign is designed to be utilized locally in a variety of ways, including billboards, sandwich boards, in-branch signage, and more.

3. The clean and simple messaging and design of the campaign cuts through the clutter of other marketing campaigns.

Billboards have been used as a marketing tool for years and the nation’s highway system made them an iconic part of the American landscape.

And with the help of the Open Your Eyes to a Credit Union® campaign, a Midwestern credit union is beefing up its investment in this consistently reliable marketing tool.

“I’ve always been a fan of billboards,” says Brian Christensen, President and CEO of Columbus United Federal Credit Union in northeastern Nebraska. The credit union uses billboards primarily to promote its institutional brand to maintain community support.

Columbus United started out as an employee credit union for local manufacturing companies, so it boasts a large blue-collar membership. (Christensen points out that the city of Columbus has the highest number of manufacturing jobs per capita in Nebraska.)
“We have placed billboards along roads leading to our manufacturing centers, so members and potential customers see our messages on the way to work and on the way home,” Brian says. The credit union also advertises on billboards at high-traffic intersections in Columbus.

As the credit union looked for growth opportunities, it recognized a need to increase service to the fast-growing Hispanic population in the community. Working with a consulting company in Iowa, Columbus United developed products designed to fit this community’s specific needs, offering packages to help improve credit ratings for members who needed them.

They promoted the new products through Spanish language billboards. “The credit-builder loans exploded in popularity,” Brian says. “Running ads in Spanish was a no-brainer.”

Columbus United is pursuing additional growth by expanding operations from five to 15 counties in the region. The plan includes opening a branch to serve the new counties as well as promoting its online services.

In these new areas, Columbus United will need to establish brand awareness and introduce itself to consumers unfamiliar with credit unions.

“Many of these new communities haven’t been served by a credit union before,” Christensen says, “so we are using Open Your Eyes to introduce ourselves, and educate them about our products and services to get the people accustomed to the idea of using a credit union.”

The Open Your Eyes billboards provide the credit union with a cost-effective way to establish itself and build familiarity with its products in tandem with promoting an upcoming re-branding.

Content for the billboards comes straight from resources available to campaign contributors. “The campaign’s appeal is in its simple and clean message. It presents very well and cuts through all the clutter of billboards that try to say too many things,” Brian says. “This is the one you’re going to look at first.”
He notes that even his local marketing company was trying to make billboard messaging too busy. “We don’t want to cause traffic accidents,” he quips.

Columbus United found the billboards easy to create through the Contributor HQ portal. “We could select an image and copy, download it and pass it on to our billboard company,” he says. “Simple as that.” The credit union will continue its Spanish-language billboards using copy available from the campaign.

Taking advantage of the campaign’s creative assets saved Columbus United time and money, allowing them to quickly and easily develop attractive billboards with the right messages. The campaign even drew praise from the marketing director at a local hospital, one of the premier marketers in the community, who also happens to be a member of the board at Columbus United.

“She was very excited that we had joined the campaign,” Brian says.

The billboards may be just the first stage for the campaign in the Columbus area. Brian says the credit union is interested in extending its use in other media.

**All credit unions that participate in the Open Your Eyes campaign can take advantage of the same benefits that Columbus United is enjoying, including the very popular Messaging Guide.**

Materials available to contributing members are research-based and market-tested. They are packaged in designs that are easy to customize and download for varying uses, from billboards to sandwich boards and in-house signage – even a hot air balloon!

The clean, eye-catching designs can help a credit union improve its brand awareness in its community. As more credit unions turn to Open Your Eyes marketing, they will help expand public recognition of the advantages of credit union banking across the country.

Open Your Eyes to a Credit Union is the Credit Union Awareness brand platform and is designed to help drive consumers to credit unions.

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