



Freedom 4 E-bikes created eye-catching posters and sell sheets using Costco's 1-Hour Photo Center.



Picture-perfect marketing

1-Hour Photo products can give any business a creative edge

By Kreta Chandler

MOST SMALL BUSINESSES depend on marketing collateral to build their brand, attract new customers, promote products and services, and build customer relationships and loyalty. And in today's highly competitive marketplace and fluctuating economy, it is more important than ever for small businesses to set themselves apart from others with new types of promotional materials as they compete for customers, while saving time and money.

Many small-business owners and nonprofit organizations now use the Costco 1-Hour Photo Center to produce new types of business communication materials that create awareness and preference for their brand, products and services and that help them appreciate and stay in touch with their customers.

Show off retail products

Deb and Mike Weatherby, for example, recently opened a new type of electric bicycle store in Vermont (www.freedom4ebikes.com) and printed signage and point-of-sale materials at the Costco Photo Center. Using a common publishing software program, they first designed each document to include their logo and then saved the document as a JPG file onto a flash drive to take to Costco for printing.

The Weatherbys printed 16-by-20-inch poster boards of their store name and logo to use as signage and displayed them in their store's front and side windows. For point-of-sale materials, they printed several 5-by-7-inch

sheets as shelf talkers throughout the store. They also printed 8-by-10-inch sheets that describe a bicycle's features and benefits, and put each one into a plastic sleeve that hangs on each bicycle. And as a takeaway for potential customers, they printed 500 4-by-6-inch photo reproductions of their logo and a photo of the bike as a reminder.

Services and nonprofits

Other small businesses, such as architectural and design firms, also print business materials at Costco Photo Centers. Architects Brett Potter, AIA; Dan Kamp, AIA; and Mike Potter, ASLA (www.focusarchitects.com) typically produce several large-scale drawings and plans for each phase of a major architectural design project. They print large posters and poster boards to use as visual aids at client concept meetings and at planning board and county commission approval hearings. The concept poster boards are sometimes given as gifts to clients when the project is completed.

"Costco provides us with a high-quality and professional product that is also cost-effective, since we often need to update concepts and plans at each phase and reprint them," says Brett Potter.

Charities and other nonprofit organizations also use the Costco Photo Center for printing. Love A Child Ministries (www.loveachild.com), for example, affordably prints 500 to 5,000 4-by-6-inch photos at a time.

The ministry mails the photos to sponsors to keep them informed of their emergency-relief projects and developmental programs in Haiti, such as housing, schools and food distribution projects. In 2010, Love A Child provided more than 11 million meals to the needy in Haiti and is providing medical care and housing to over 2,000 victims of the last earthquake, according to Mike Essmann at the ministry. "The photos show a sponsor that their donation is achieving what their heart wants it to be," he says.



Love A Child Ministries uses photos to keep donors updated on its work in Haiti.

Regardless of the type of small business you have, here are a few other ideas you can use to promote and operate your business and to generate incremental revenue with new products you can sell.

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