
Case Studies | Industrial Marketing

Client

Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation - North Carolina

Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation is a member-owned cooperative specializing in electrical distribution to its 72,000-membership base consisting of rural residents and corporations in Caldwell, Watauga, Ashe and Allegheny counties and parts of Wilkes, Alexander and Avery counties in North Carolina.

Target Audience

Blue Ridge's 72,000 members

Objective

To provide members with a newly formatted Annual Report that enhances customer satisfaction by delivering member capital credits in the form of a credit or a check, cooperative news and a services brochure.

Challenge

There were three major challenges to this project:

1. Design the annual report so that it fit postal codes
2. Uniquely identify each of 72,000 members with variable data
3. Accurately match checks or credits to the appropriate member

Solution

The issue of sending the correct check to a specific member was resolved by die-cutting a window on the back of the self-mailed report. The variable addresses appeared on the back side of the check or refund to ensure that the appropriate money was mailed to the specific member. The "services" brochure was designed to fit into the annual report structure and be used in the future as a stand-alone piece. Communicating value-added services is a critical aspect of Blue Ridge's overall messaging strategy. The lighter weight paper stocks and overall structure of the piece were selected so that the annual reports could be mailed as affordably as possible.

Results

Members who attended Blue Ridge's Annual Meeting had overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding the newly formatted annual report:

1. Raised member/owner identity.

A third-party survey was conducted in the second quarter of 2008 by TSE Services, Inc.

to quantify member/owner satisfaction and messaging success. The survey revealed that member identity rose to 74.4%, up 8.3 points from the first quarter of 2008, representing the largest jump in member/owner identity since data was first collected in 2004, as well as the highest member/owner identity rating ever received. Previous ratings were in the 68% range.

2. Increased awareness of the benefits of Capital Credits

The survey showed definitively that the new Annual Report package raised the level of awareness and understanding of the benefits of the capital credits for members/owners. Of those surveyed, the following percentage of members/owners reported a better understanding of capital credits:

- 41% of those who received checks with their annual report
- 28% of those who received the bill/credit insert with their annual report
- 33% of new members who received the general information (without a check or a bill/credit insert)

3. Increased customer satisfaction

Client research has shown that member/owner identity drives customer satisfaction. Indeed, the TSE survey measured customer satisfaction at 9.1 on a 10-point scale. This rating represents one of the highest customer satisfaction levels Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation has ever received.

Client's Reaction to the Project

“For well over a year,” explained Renee Whitener, director of public relations for Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, “Gotham’s Woody Stoudemire not only worked closely with me to plan the project, but he also met with other employees and vendors who were responsible for executing this project every step of the way.” She continued, “I especially like Woody’s high level of accountability and how he treats each project as his own regarding not only creating effective design and copy, but also in finding cost effective ways to develop and deliver the project. I could not have chosen a better marketing partner than Gotham for a project of this magnitude and importance to our strategic public relations plan. They were a very big reason for its success.”