



Case Study: PAHO/WHO FCU Targets Card Portfolio Growth Advisors Plus Acts as Credit Union's Marketing Department

Overview

PAHO/WHO FCU (Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Federal Credit Union) was founded in 1949 with the mission to “help members of the global health community live better, healthier financial lives.” Assets stand at over \$210 million and the credit union serves a member base of more than 5,100. PAHO/WHO FCU has its headquarters and a branch office in Washington, D.C.

The Challenge

Growth is an objective for just about any business in every industry, and credit unions are no exception. However, smaller institutions sometimes lack the in-house resources for planning and implementing optimal growth strategies. This was the situation faced by PAHO/WHO FCU, a Washington, D.C.-based credit union with less than 19 full-time employees and no one specifically dedicated to marketing.

The credit union decided to undertake an ambitious campaign with a twofold objective: get qualified members to seek credit line increases (CLI) and/or upgrade Mastercard Platinum cardholders to their new Rewards World Mastercard® card. One challenging aspect of the campaign was that a large portion of PAHO/WHO's membership residing outside the United States prefers to communicate in Spanish.

An even more daunting issue, however, was that PAHO/WHO's foreign membership does not have Social Security numbers—typically a necessity for determining creditworthiness through credit bureaus. To have a successful campaign, the credit union would need to work around the absence of SSNs while also meeting legal requirements and credit-issuer best practices. As one of PSCU's Owners, it's only natural that PAHO/WHO would reach out to Advisors Plus.

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The Solution

Advisors Plus can be seen as ready-made for credit unions like PAHO/WHO FCU. With a singular mission of helping credit unions grow, Advisors Plus brings to the table highly experienced marketing consultants, managers, and a variety of customizable campaigns for PSCU Member-Owners.

"We are happy to have Advisors Plus as an extended arm for us to use to accomplish certain goals," says Patricia Ilijic, Executive Vice President, PAHO/WHO FCU. "We don't have a lot of manpower and we have a diverse membership." Though the credit union's unique situation could pose a

challenge for the Advisors Plus team, Ilijic noted that Advisors Plus stepped up without any hesitation.

Esteban Arze, Lending Manager, PAHO/WHO FCU, recalls, "Advisors Plus helped us with strategizing for members who reside overseas and don't have a Social Security number. It was a very well structured process. The project manager, Pilar (Pilar Ramirez, Advisors Plus Channel Program Manager), is extremely good at setting up how everything was to go. It was a nice layout of the project and expectations from the beginning."

Given the campaign's dual purpose, there was quite a bit of complexity. First, in order to qualify members who lacked a SSN, the Advisors Plus team created opt-in messages instructing those members to call the credit union directly and provide additional information for credit bureau consideration. Initial messaging, reminders and follow-up communications had to be devised by Advisors Plus to sort all targeted cardholders into groups for four scenarios: qualified for a CLI and Rewards World Mastercard upgrade, qualified for CLI but not the card upgrade, qualified for the card upgrade but not CLI, and prequalified ("Opt-in") for just the CLI.

Ilijic especially appreciated the help Advisors Plus provided in developing all campaign marketing assets for each grouping, including webpages, letters and emails—both in English and Spanish. She comments, "Pilar is bilingual, so she was able to read the pieces and know what we were talking about. She was just great and very patient!"



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Of course, Advisors Plus is much more than one person. "Their entire team is great and the analytics are really good too," Arze says. "The reporting side is something that you really value in order to see a campaign's worth for our company." For example, Advisors Plus analytics showed that the email performance in the campaign far outperformed industry expectations, and that over half the responses came as a result of a "reminder" email.

Results

"The experience was very good," Arze says. "I can foresee that it will be really profitable for us. We generated a lot of new cards and we increased the limits on cards for a lot of members." Ilijic adds, "Everything worked well. It was a good partnership."

In fact, by most direct marketing standards, the response rates were astounding. Before starting the campaign, PAHO/WHO's card portfolio numbered about 2,100 cards. "We were able to generate 90 new plastics for our World card, and 611 members have received a credit line increase, so you can see it really worked!" Ilijic exclaims.

"We weren't expecting 600 people to get a credit line increase," Arze adds. He also says the number of new Rewards Cards generated by the Advisors Plus campaign matched the number issued for the entire year that the card was offered. "It was fantastic!"



Both Ilijic and Arze are definite that Advisors Plus will remain a vital contributor to the credit union's marketing efforts going forward.

"There are only 19 of us and there is only a two-person department when it comes to Mastercard, so we look at Advisors Plus as the marketing department," Ilijic says.