

## Minnesota KKBC Takes the Plunge into Catalogs



KKBC staff (from left to right): Owners Mike and Kathy Maguire, Manager Kelly Martenson, Graphic Designer Teena Stewart, Graphic Designer/CSR Lauren Sedal, CSR Mitchell Lewis and CSR Joey Erkenbrack

You never can tell where you will bump into your next big customer. Their son's and daughter's competitive swim meet was the unlikely backdrop of a new business partnership for Mike and Kathy Maguire, owners of KKBC in Lakeville, Minnesota. The Olympic-size job that resulted from a chance encounter and a casual conversation pushed them beyond their level of previous experience and into their biggest role to date as a provider of business solutions.

"Selling opportunities always come up in everyday life," said Mike. "We keep our ears open for them."

Mike's conversation with a swimwear apparel rep from Elsmore Aquatic resulted in a turnkey job for 18,000 variable data postcards created by KKBC graphic designer Teena Stewart. The card featured a model wearing a swim cap personalized with the mail recipient's first name. "The card generated a lot of interest," said Mike. "The vendor was so pleased with the outcome that he wanted us to work with him on creating a catalog."

Mike called on Teena again to design a personalized, 60-page full-color catalog complete with the company logo, pricing and more than 1,300 images from big name swimming apparel manufacturers like Speedo, TYR and Nike.

"We learned a lot as we worked on the catalog," said Mike. "We designed and coordinated the whole project, taking care of everything from creating the concept and design to managing the printing, data and mailing."

Mike and Teena spent hours collaborating on the catalog with Elsmore and outside vendors. He found a local printing company with a Web press and learned about their stringent pre-press requirements. He took away lessons about personally overseeing the job including managing deadlines and performing quality control. "I watched as the sheets came off the press," he said. Mike also cleaned up and merged several of the mailing lists. His center did not have the capability to address the 21,000 piece project, so Mike turned to an outside vendor for mailing.

"We had a lot of trust from our client," said Mike. "Vendor sales reps' deadlines didn't always coincide with ours. We proved ourselves with the first mailing, so Elsmore knew we could do the job. We learned to advocate for our client." The entire project – from concept to mailing – took only two months.

Elsmore opted to follow the catalog mailing with 24,000 postcards sent to the same mailing list, a job Mike worked on in October.

The client said the catalog would have a shelf life of about a year. Mike knows the experience producing this year's catalog will not only make them more valuable to Elsmore when the next project rolls around, but also increases the types of services in their arsenal.

"Don't be afraid to get your feet wet with something new, and be sure to price your services fairly – don't make your margin too thin," said Mike. ♦