

Special Orders to Meet Restaurants' Expanding Needs

Primanti Bros. gets updated menus printed and shipped on time.



CHALLENGE

As its business continued to grow, Primanti Bros. struggled to get its customized menus printed for the various regions and promotions across the seven US states in which it operates.

SOLUTION

Moving to Staples Business Advantage printing delivered includes packaging and shipping materials.

RESULT

Significant savings in time for staff, improved results in quality of delivered materials, and an overall improved customer experience.

Since its founding in downtown Pittsburgh in 1933, Primanti Bros. has sought to cater to local neighborhood tastes. In the early days, that meant adding fried potatoes to meat sandwiches for truck drivers and other hard-working, hungry patrons.

That theme carries on. Every new restaurant that opens – and there are a lot since Primanti Bros. has been expanding rapidly in recent years – includes décor reflecting local celebrities and menus that reflect local favorites: a locally-produced sandwich meat or a hometown beer selection in Pennsylvania, or a special mayo popular in Indiana.

Among the many behind-the-scenes tasks that go into making a Primanti Bros. experience special to customers: making sure that the menus on the table reflect the region and special offers appeal to customers.

In the past, keeping those menus updated across the chain is the job that kept production manager Amy Smith awake at night. But not anymore.

The Challenge

Managing growth is always a challenge – a good challenge to have. In the past three years, Primanti Bros. has almost doubled in size, adding 17 new restaurants to reach a total of 37 in seven states. That growth means the pace in Smith's office is the busiest it's been during her 11 years at the company. From her office in Pittsburgh, she produces new menus twice a year for all 37 restaurants, adding new items and updates to reflect regional tastes. In addition, she prints the materials that publicize promotions.

Picture it: the menu is like a book which gets distributed to all of the locations. It regularly requires new pages inserted for a sandwich, entrée, beer or special event in the specific region. Sometimes a new edition replaces it. And posters and restaurant table tents corresponding to new items also need to go to the various locations.

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While Smith's team and its printing vendor were doing their best to keep pace with this growth and change, eventually they reached the breaking point. The printer could not handle both the printing of the menu and promotional materials and the packing and shipping of those materials to various locations.

Instead, Smith found herself staying late in the office on many nights, preparing print orders and looking for boxes to ship them out. "That was a challenge because sending a package to one restaurant could include an 18 by 24 poster, maybe 100 table tents and some menu pieces. All would be different sizes and I would have to figure out how to ship them," she says.

When Smith started to see mistakes in shipping, and higher charges for last-minute express deliveries, Smith knew it was time to change vendors.

The Solution

Primanti Bros. had used Staples in the past to buy office supplies. When Smith and her team learned about the capabilities offered by Staples Business Advantage, they were eager to try working on a printing and shipping project.

The first job – table tents and promotions for a Lent-season fish dinner special at 20 of the company's restaurants – went smoothly. "That first job was great because I didn't have to worry about getting shipping supplies," Smith says. "In the past, every time I had to do a print job, I'd have to ask my colleague to order me tubes and boxes and other shipping supplies that I don't normally have here."

Instead of relying on whatever boxes she had on hand (risking damaged materials), and rushing to ship them (incurring extra costs), she knew that Staples Business Advantage would take care of it. And on the print side, she found that Staples Business Advantage was able to pick up all the details of her print jobs, from menu page inserts to promotion specifics to variable delivery locations.

"These can be complicated jobs and explaining the various components to printers was sometimes difficult," Smith says. "Since working with Staples Business Advantage, I haven't had any issues and it's a huge relief because once it leaves my desk, I don't hear about it until it arrives on the tables in the restaurants."

That saves time, money – and stress – for Smith and her team.

Primanti Bros has continued to expand its relationship with Staples Business Advantage, adding the printing of training materials, and producing special jobs, like plastic "window clings" that announce promotions on glass doors and windows as patrons enter a restaurant.

The Benefits

The time Smith saves working with Staples Business Advantage means she can concentrate on other tasks. With the hours she used to spend packing, shipping and sometimes arranging deliveries, she can focus on more strategic duties. For example, she is investigating setting up an online portal to enter her print orders more quickly.

She also has more time to work on other parts of her job, like managing the company's relationships with food vendors, organizing company events and leading community fundraisers that the company sponsors.

Company at a Glance

Primanti Bros.

Overview:

Family-style restaurant specializing in sandwiches, wings and pizza. Started as family-owned sandwich shop in the 1930s for local Pittsburgh residents, has been expanding rapidly in recent years throughout Western Pennsylvania and into six other states.

Key Facts:

- Based in Pittsburgh
- Founded in 1933
- 37 restaurants in Pennsylvania, Florida, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia

37 Number of restaurants Primanti Bros. owns

7 Number of US states in which Primanti Bros. has restaurants

17 Number of restaurants added in past three years

2 Number of times Primanti Bros refreshes its menus each year