

Persona takes active role in keeping people safe

The coronavirus pandemic seemingly is affecting everybody, but Persona Signs of Watertown, S.D., and its employees are working to make things a little more bearable in this extraordinary time.

While several employees are using their downtime to make facemasks for local healthcare facilities, Persona itself is allocating a large portion of its manufacturing capacity and resources to developing hygiene shields, making workplaces safer for essential employees.

When the manager of a Watertown grocery store wanted to give his employees an extra level of protection against the virus, he called on Persona, one of the largest sign makers in the United States. The grocery store had already moved to make the store safer for both customers and employees through increased disinfecting, more “social distancing,” and altering traffic patterns in the store.

However, when the store manager noticed that his workers were still being exposed beyond their comfort level, he asked Persona for help.

Persona immediately began designing shields that could be manufactured quickly and inexpensively, and that could be easily installed to provide an extra layer of protection between workers and customers.

Les Rossman from Technical Sales and a group of Persona designers came up with the solution.

“We’re a sign company,” Rossman said, “so this project was totally different from anything we’ve done before. We just had four or five people around the table and came up with a design that we thought would work.”

The shields can be manufactured in less than an hour. In fact, Persona delivered the store’s shields just two days after the first meeting with the store manager, a turnaround time that was appreciated given the circumstances.

Persona is offering the shields to other businesses, both locally and across North America. The shields have been well received, with hundreds ordered or delivered so far. Many more orders are anticipated.

“It just goes to show,” Rossman said, “that when you have the right people working on a project, you can do some pretty amazing things.”

Persona has dedicated a portion of its production resources to manufacturing the hygiene guard, which can be installed in businesses such as pharmacies, grocery and convenience stores, hotels, restaurant take-out windows, banks, post offices and other essential businesses.

“At Persona, we have the ability to adapt and change during these times to help keep, not only essential business workers, but their customers safe,” said company President Mike Peterson.

Persona didn’t stop at keeping employees safe. The company worked with its lenders to offer customers a new national financing plan to help them thrive in spite of these challenging times.

Persona’s plan allows companies to complete their sign projects while retaining their vital capital for operating expenses. The financing plan features a low interest rate, friendly terms, options for deferred payments, and no vendor deposits. Best of all, customers can make it happen quickly, including same-day credit decisions.

Other Persona employees are also doing some helpful things. According to Amber Dahl, Persona’s vice-president of Human Resources, a dozen or so employees are joining other local manufacturing workers sewing masks, packaging and delivering them to the Salvation Army to be used at health care facilities in and around Watertown.

In addition, Persona has many employees involved with delivering supplies and other tasks, and even donating money, either through Persona, their churches, or just on their own.

“We’ve also had employees ask how they can help their co-workers,” Dahl said. “We have at least a dozen employees actively making, packaging and delivering masks right now.

The old adage says every cloud has a silver lining, and Dahl didn’t have to search long to find one.

“All of our employees are really resilient people, and this is going to build more resilience,” Dahl said. “I’m grateful that I am surrounded by really good people at Persona. What I hope comes out of this is that everybody looks out for one another. We’ve always been that way, but even more so now.”