

# INDUSTRY TRENDS

The International Sign Association

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## 4 Ways to Build Business at ISA International Sign Expo 2017

The statistics certainly signal a good year for the sign, graphics and visual communications industry. Earlier this year, the National Federation of Independent Businesses released a survey that showed that business owner optimism had increased dramatically. Those surveyed said they expected better business conditions, anticipated more sales and saw it as a good time to expand.

End users that are growing will need more signs, graphics and visual communications products, and some of that same optimism is likely felt in our industry.

So what can a business owner do to capitalize on this enthusiasm? Put ISA International Sign Expo 2017 on the calendar for April.

Here are some ways to grow your business at the event.

### 1 *Get hands-on experience with the latest products.*

Ray Peters of AAA Sign Co. Inc in Martinez, Ga., said there is something about seeing the latest offerings in person. *"It's not like looking at it on a computer screen or in a catalog.* And there's the explanation that vendors can give you on how to use their products."

Steve Ebanks of Xerographic Digital Printing in Orlando, Fla., came to the ISA Sign Expo 2016 to see printed samples. He said then that he planned to purchase a new flatbed in 2017. *"There are lots of new ideas. That's what we came here for."*

His company had purchased a smaller flatbed printer in 2015 and was already looking to expand. *"I have been to a lot of shows for the printing industry and they have some of the equipment there, but there's a lot more here.* There are a lot of vendors selling accessory products that come in handy."

That can be a strategic advantage, said Greg Bourdon of Direct Capital Corporation in Portsmouth, N.H. *"With competitors seeing what the newest and greatest equipment is,*

you'll be behind the ball. And the next time a customer comes in and they're looking for something that you don't have the capability to do because you're limited on what equipment you have or what materials you are using, *you're putting yourself at risk to your competition."*

### 2 *Make that ONE right connection.*

With more than 20,000 attendees, there will be plenty of possibilities to connect with a vendor, partner or customer. Randy Taylor of Taylor Sign and Design in Jacksonville, Fla., comes with a goal of building relationships with suppliers.

*"Each year we've come back, we increased business,* so now there are about 18 companies we do business with. It's a good way to network. It's a good way to put a face to the voice on the phone so you can be a little more personalized with the people you work with."

Annette Southern of Atlas Sign Industries in West Palm Beach, Fla., said the ISA Networking Reception for National and Custom Sign Companies is extremely important. *"These are the people we depend on; they depend*

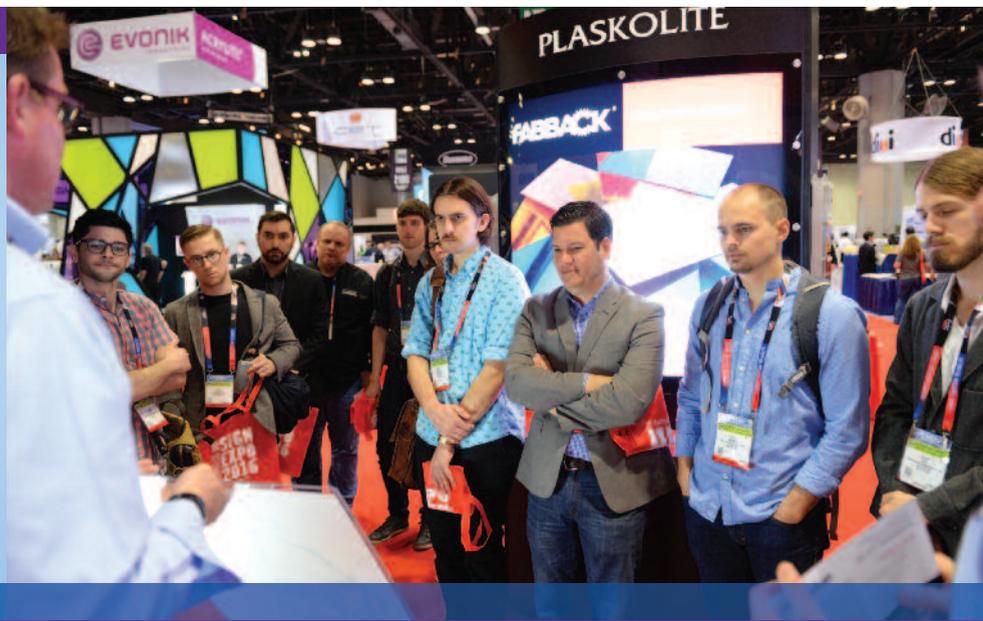


April 20-22 at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas.

Learn more at [www.signexpo.org](http://www.signexpo.org).

### STATS • FACTS

The U.S. economy is poised to grow at 2-3 percent in 2017, according to Goldman Sachs. One in four small businesses say they'll expand



on us and the national companies to feed them business. They are an extension of us. Without all these other sign companies, we couldn't do our job, we couldn't service our customers, so *it's a great opportunity. We meet new companies as well, and we visit the companies we do business with all year long.*"

### 3 Find expansion opportunities.

Matthew Hart of Engraved Image in Temperance, Mich., has been engraving signs for decades. But his company has been looking to expand. ISA International Sign Expo offered the opportunity to learn more—and to avoid potentially costly mistakes. "Being in the business in the past, we found out that the most important thing is to make sure that you do your homework instead of just jumping in because this looks neat. And that's why we are here; *we are here to do the homework and build the resources to get a lot of things to expand our offerings to our customers.* We are looking to expand on the showroom, the equipment and the personnel."

Even though his company isn't interested—at least, not yet—in electronic signs, "it's something we need to keep on our radar and

see how it might apply to the interior signage that we do. It's being aware of the market and of trends so when a situation comes up, we know how to handle it. Our long-term planning has to incorporate what we see here today."

Johanna Kline of Vision Audio in Cameron, Mo., also saw her business grow through customer demand. Initially, she thought the sign portion would be limited to stickers and wraps, but "all of a sudden we got a huge demand for signs and LEDs. *That inspired us to take the leap.*"

### 4 Build your team.

Going to ISA International Sign Expo can help build key staff. Jim Wassterstrom of Advance Sign Group in Columbus, Ohio, said attending the event is a "perk because we give them a little bit of time to really kind of focus on the specifics of our company and what they do in the company. *When you build your team, it helps to market yourself a sign company that has really great expertise.*"

And there are tangible benefits that come from having additional input on products and

opportunities, said Lynn Henifin of NW Safety Signs Inc. in Bellingham, Wash. "Bringing our employees *helps us really get a feel for where we want to grow the business.* Then we can take that back and build a really strong team within our organization so we can empower them to help us grow."

Those strong teams will no doubt be poised to seize upon the opportunities that today's business environment presents.

Want to capitalize on this business-building event? Make plans to attend ISA International Sign Expo 2017. And here's a start to increasing profits: attend the tradeshow for free by using "ISAreport" when registering. | 



## STATS • FACTS

in 2017, according to the National Federation of Independent Businesses. •