

# Industry **APRIL 2020** TRENDS



## HEALTH INSURANCE A VALUABLE MEMBER BENEFIT

*Health insurance plans are available to ISA and affiliated association members through NAM Health Care, administered by Mercer. Tailored plans and flexible choices previously available only to larger companies now allow companies of any size to offer competitive benefits.*

*Other membership benefits include:*

- *Assistance with sign codes and regulations*
- *Cutting edge and information webinars and research*
- *Discounts on ISA education and training programs.*

*To learn more about ISA membership, visit [www.signs.org/isamembership](http://www.signs.org/isamembership).*

*Membership in an ISA affiliate brings additional benefits. To find the affiliate in your region, visit [www.signs.org/affiliates](http://www.signs.org/affiliates).*



## THE INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

### The Power of Connection

With thousands of professionals working in the sign, graphic and visual communications industry, surely one has an answer to the issue you're facing right now. Or maybe they need the product or service that you offer.

But how can you find that right person? Membership in ISA and affiliates can build long-term relationships that turn into valuable resources.

#### *Business-Building Contacts*

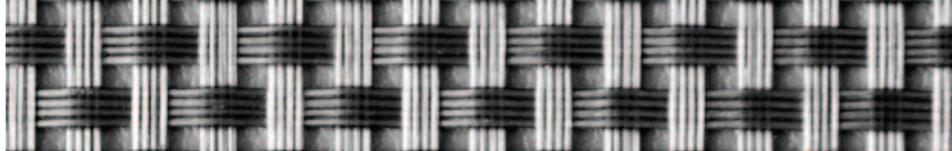
As a relatively young company in a highly specialized niche of the sign and lighting world, Hi Light Services owners Aaron Childs and Dan MacCarrick knew that joining the International Sign Association and its affiliates would give instant credibility. What they didn't necessarily anticipate was the direct link to business through connections made.

Hi Light Services, LLC specializes in installation and repairs for high rises. Clients are sign companies who don't often have the training to rappel down a skyscraper to repair a sign, replace lighting or handle the installation.

"Instead of them turning a project away, they can connect with us, where we do the service call or an install," said Childs, who manages field operations of the business with his son, Logan. "Most sign companies will only get a request for that kind of work two or four times a year and it's just not worth having a full crew that specializes in that."

In the past five years, Hi Light has joined Southern States, Mid South and Texas sign associations—all of which are ISA affiliates. They try to attend at least one event per year at each affiliate. "Our marketing is to meet with clients, and being a member of ISA and affiliates has really helped."

At one Southern States event, he looked around the room and counted five clients "that I acquired from going to these events," he said.



He also attends ISA International Sign Expo for the ISA Networking Reception for National and Custom Sign Companies, which offers an opportunity to connect with national companies who often look for local installers. “That gets our name out there. Two years ago, we picked up three clients at that meet-and-greet,” he said. “With us being a smaller company in a niche, getting what we do in front of national sign companies is a great asset.”

Whether at ISA Sign Expo or at an affiliate event, the personal connection pays off. “Since we work nationwide, there are a lot of clients that we’ve met through email and phone conversations. It is nice to be able to get together with your clients and put a face with the people that you’ve interacted with over the year.”

### **Problem-Solving Connections**

Matt DiSalvatore, vice president and sales manager for Creative Signs Inc., joined his family’s business, which started primarily as a small, custom company that revolved around his father Tony’s talent for handpainting. These days, the company has expanded into electrical signs, and all that comes along with that.

In 2017, Matt joined the ISA Elite, a program that brings together young professionals for networking and education. The program has developed into a thriving connection in which each year’s class is warmly welcomed into the fold. All stay in regular contact through the GroupMe messaging app.

“We’re still in contact two years later, on almost a weekly basis,” Matt said. “If someone is running into an issue, we put it out there and get great advice. It’s almost like having a board of directors for my business where I can get advice from people doing the same thing that I am. These are local sign shops like me, going through the same headaches that I do, so I can pick their brains.”

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Those relationships have paid off too. He made connections with other Elite members who work for national sign companies and “now I’m a vendor for them,” he said. “That has brought in \$20,000 from one company since we met.”

He also has met vendors and suppliers, which has been equally as beneficial. At ISA Sign Expo 2019, he stopped by one supplier’s booth to visit an Elite colleague. His company had never used

that supplier before. “They asked what we were looking for. When we told them, they were able to show us the same router for several thousand dollars cheaper than our usual supplier. That wouldn’t have happened if the relationship wasn’t there through the Elite program.”

He also has asked peers about equipment they’ve purchased—and even helped navigate challenges. “We had some trouble with our channel letter bender that we bought a few years ago. We were able to troubleshoot an issue with someone else who has the same bender,” he said. A service contract on the boom truck also came through an Elite relationship. “We’re going to be adding a boom truck and when we do, we’ll definitely be looking at them because their service is so great,” Matt said.

Joining the ISA Elite program has deepened his involvement in ISA and his local affiliated association, Southern States Sign Association (SSSA).

“I wasn’t super involved in Southern States before the ISA Elite program,” he said. “I reached out to Southern States and said, ‘I’d like to get more involved.’”

He was quickly brought on board. These days, he’s heavily involved in advocacy work, helping SSSA as chair of the Legislative committee and serving on the SSSA board. It was through the advocacy work where he connected with Ken Soday, who had long worked as a volunteer on advocacy issues. He also is a competitor. “We both believe there’s plenty of business to go around,” Matt said. “He’s taken me under his wing. He’s the reason I joined the legislative committee. He brought me in, taught me about permitting and variances. His shop is much bigger than ours and I’ve been able to refer work over to him. Just being able to call him up, even though he’s a competitor, and ask, ‘Have you ever run into this issue in that county?’ He’s always willing to help out.”

The same can be said for most who work in the sign, graphics and visual communications industry. Whether looking for advice from someone who has used that product, tackled that sign code or faced that challenge, the answer is usually there and ISA membership can provide the link to find it.

