

# INDUSTRY TRENDS

The International Sign Association



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY 2018 EDITION

## Dare to Expand in 2018



### GETTING THERE

ISA International Sign Expo 2018 is March 22-24 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. The pre-conference workshops will be March 21. Visit [www.signexpo.org](http://www.signexpo.org) to register, to sign up for education classes, explore the trade show floor or book hotels.

We get it: It can be risky to attend a trade show, especially if it's your first time, or if the event itself is unproven. ISA International Sign Expo is coming up on its 75th anniversary, so we know a few things about creating an event that delivers results for sign, graphics and visual communications professionals. But perhaps you'd rather hear that from someone else.

Here are some of ways last year's attendees have built their businesses.

#### *Nail the Finished Product*

A trade show that does not deliver on innovative products—and ultimately allows you to provide more exciting and interesting results for your clients—is a wasted few days. No worries at ISA International Sign Expo 2018, which features a larger-than-ever trade show floor and many new product introductions.

Kyle Edmonds, vice president of sales and co-owner of Mitchell Signs, brings clients to walk the trade show floor. "ISA International

Sign Expo allows us to be a much better partner with some of our clients, especially with design firms. They can say, 'Hey, here's what we want it to look like. How in the world would you build this as a sign?' I bring the client here. It not only helps with the relationship, but it shows them the products that are out there and helps them to see some of the capabilities that maybe we don't think to mention. They can then see it themselves and it's just an all-around fun show to come to anyway."

### STATS • FACTS

Growth in all four segments of the sign, graphics and visual communications industry is forecasted to continue above trend through the end of 2018,

With nearly 600 exhibitors, the creativity of the sign, graphics and visual communications industry is readily apparent. Not sure where to start? The 2018 Innovation Awards will be filled with groundbreaking new products in three categories: print; business solutions/software; and electronic & traditional signage. A visit to those booths is a must. You can build in the rest of your schedule through the free MyExpoPlan tool on the [signexpo.org](http://signexpo.org) website.

### *Spark Creativity in Education*

The sign, graphics and visual communications industry is undergoing a significant change. Not only are new products coming into the market, but business also is changing at a rapid speed. It can be challenging to keep up. The old ways of doing things certainly won't propel your business forward.

That's where Betsy Swan of Allen Industries finds value in the education sessions. "The knowledge that has come out of education has been very helpful in awakening our skills, whether it be on the sales side or more on the drafting and design. There are so many different options to choose from in the education that you're not going to walk away bored, that's for sure."

One of the most popular events each year is the Game Changer sessions, which bring true innovators to provide a spark. This year, the number of Game Changers has increased. Shannon Huffman Polson, one of the first women to fly an Apache attack helicopter, will provide tangible leadership tools. Chef Jeff Henderson will provide a recipe to discover hidden business aptitudes. Kim Lear will showcase how generational differences can be an opportunity.

Also new in 2018, two pre-conference workshops: an Executive Boot Camp and a workshop for Wide Format Print sales. Both will be held March 21.

### *Make that One Powerful Connection*

With more than 20,000 sign, graphics and visual communications professionals all in one place, ISA International Sign Expo provides an unprecedented opportunity to build relationships with clients and vendors. Come away with the same "tremendous impact" that Bill Uline of Sign Faces finds. "It has a tremendous impact on our business relationships... with both suppliers and customers. You have access to experts in various industries and the products that they sell, and the amount of information that is available to you is a great opportunity. You can talk face-to-face with someone that knows exactly what their particular product is or the service that they provide."

Close out each day with the Last Hour Happy Hour. Grab a free beer and mingle with attendees and exhibitors. The ISA Networking Reception for National and Custom Sign Companies is a prime opportunity to make connections for installers. It will be March 23. National sign companies interested in participating should contact Alicia Auerswald at [alicia.auerswald@signs.org](mailto:alicia.auerswald@signs.org). Custom sign companies only need to show a show badge to enter.

### *Extend the Event through a Peer Network*

Faye Rowell of Watchfire Signs knows how hard it can be to find people like her. She's young and female and works in the relatively small city of Danville, Ill. "I've felt kind of isolated. And coming to ISA International Sign Expo was the most amazing thing for me. I felt like I was someone on an island having this whole network of people."

Rowell was a member of the 2016 class of ISA Elite, which brings together young people for networking opportunities. It's a program that has paid off, since the connections made at the event carry on throughout the year. "Days when I'm searching for help, days when I don't know where to go with

this project, I can shoot out a text and they are there to help me through that process. It's been a huge resource."

Before making the connections through the Elite program, she attended the event and knew only her work peers. Now, "I feel like every room I go into, I know someone. It may be a friend of a friend, an alumni of an Elite member, or it's the new Elite team. And it's been really amazing. This year to last year is night and day different. And I feel like I'm part of this industry this year versus last year, and the Elite program did that for me."

That need for connection can extend well beyond age, of course. So ISA International Sign Expo 2018 will offer events designed to connect you to your industry peers. Tops among them is ISA Rocks: THE Industry Party, returning to BB King's Blues Club Orlando. Enjoy music, dancing and fun—and maybe make a connection or two. | 

