

Industry **FEBRUARY** **TRENDS** 2020



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THE INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

3 Ways ISA International Sign Expo 2020 Delivers Growth to Your Business

Attending ISA International Sign Expo 2020 isn't just a fun few days out of the office. It is the single-best investment you can make to grow your business in the coming year.

Don't believe it? These three attendees tell you how these few days pay off for their business year-round.

See What You're Missing

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Launched seven years ago, Affordable Graphics Solutions began as a sign company, but quickly added clothing, sublimation and print. A nearby community has strict historical guidelines and AGS often does the work by hand to help its customers update signage while abiding by those guidelines.

With so much custom work, finding solutions is paramount. ISA Sign Expo 2019 introduced Rosas to a tool he didn't even know he needed. The result: "We've saved time and money and landed new clients."

That's a pretty impressive result for Rosas' expectations. "I go to tradeshows all the time, but never find anything new and I wasn't expecting ISA Sign Expo to be any different. Was I wrong! This product that we found has changed our business."



Invest in Employees for Year-Round Benefits

As a small business, shutting down the shop for a few days is risky. But for John Bollwinkel, the rewards far outweighed the potential risk of any lost business.

He took his five-person shop, Ace Signs and Designs, to ISA International Sign Expo for the first time in 2019. It was so successful that he's already budgeted to do so again in 2020 even though the Orlando venue means his team will fly instead of drive.

"I believe in education as a way to build my staff and give them some fun," he said. "I'd heard about ISA Sign Expo and since it was going to be in Las Vegas and we'd had a pretty good month, I said, 'We'll go to the show and close the shop.' I didn't want anyone to stay home."

His team selected education specific to their jobs while Bollwinkel, a new owner, chose broader business topics. "I'm trying to learn how to run the business and be a good owner and manager," he said. Attending the pre-conference workshops "helped me immensely."

He has seen the impact of the education throughout the year; his team has improved their skills as a direct result of the courses they took. His business has taken off, too, helped in part by products purchased at ISA International Sign Expo.

"We had a 10-year-old printer. Seeing printers that could print twice as fast got my attention. We've really needed it, too. We're going full bore. I don't know if it was the show or what, but business has just been amazing since we attended."

Investing the time and resources to take his entire staff has certainly paid dividends. "All my staff is totally invested in the business and what we're doing. Investing back in them is an important thing to do for your people. It means you care about them and you want to help them grow."

He's already started planning his visit to ISA Sign Expo 2020, selecting the pre-conference workshop he'll attend and finding ways to spend more time in the exhibit hall. "There's so much to see," he said.

Bollwinkel also is planning ahead to close the shop, letting his customers know that his team will be away for a few days. "We made sure jobs were finished and we let people know we were going to be gone. It took a little planning, but it's not that hard to do. The benefits certainly outweigh any hassles."

Gather New Product Ideas

ARI Graphix's parent company, Albuquerque Reprographic, Inc., has been around long enough to see the printing business transform many times. But when Pixie Nunez joined the company, she saw print as just the beginning of what the company could offer its customers.

GETTING THERE

Registration is now open for ISA International Sign Expo 2020, April 2-4 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla. Pre-conference workshops are April 1. Early bird deadline for the tradeshow and education is March 4. Register at www.signexpo.org.

The company had long visited print-specific tradeshows. And while there were plenty of small changes to explore, Nunez, the company's general manager, pushed to think even bigger. She attended ISA International Sign Expo for the first time in 2017, where she found a spark of inspiration into other areas of graphic expertise.

"I spent a half-day walking the floor and realized how much more information was available at the tradeshow," Nunez said. "This changed everything."

These days, about 80 percent of the company's business is in signs and graphics.

Because of the connections made, particularly with exhibitors, ARI Graphix now offers a variety of signs. "We're still learning all the different materials. But coming into the industry somewhat ignorant was an advantage. We were able to build relationships with people who could help us, like sign wholesalers."

It's that sense of discovery that ISA International Sign Expo has opened up. "My belief is you don't know what you don't know until someone shows you. It's important to keep an open mind. Even though your business may be working, you have to stay open to working on your process because there are always avenues to improve."

In 2019, she specifically sought out more information on LED lighting so that ARI could understand lighting behind graphics. "We do some really creative printing on acrylics and other types of materials."

Attending has "really taken us from being behind to being on the innovative side of signage."

It also has opened her up to all the offerings of ISA beyond ISA International Sign Expo. She's now working to train her 27 employees on the latest aspects of the sign, graphics and visual communications industry through ISA's online learning.

"At the beginning, we were imitating others," she said. "Now people are imitating us. The more we've learned, the more it has allowed us to make our graphics more interesting."