ISA took on the sign, graphics and visual communications industry’s biggest concerns in 2016 to help you
Some of the most valuable feedback we hear from our sign, graphics and visual communications industry members are the worries that keep you up at night:

• Where can I find employees to fill my job openings?
• How can my company combat restrictive codes and regulations?
• What changes are on the horizon that could impact my business?
• Will I be able to overcome all of the unknowns while continuing to grow my business?

These concerns are not minor. And you’re not alone. Other sign, graphics and visual communications companies are facing the same challenges.

In recent years, awareness of these challenges has shaped ISA and Affiliated Associations’ initiatives on behalf of the industry. And these initiatives — on finding and keeping workers, combating restrictive codes and preparing for impending change — are making progress. Fortunately, these challenges are not insurmountable.

With imaginative solutions, we are happy to report that the advances we’ve made — together — should help you sleep a little better at night so you can rise and shine.

The people, programs and solutions that help you sleep better at night so you can rise and shine.

JEFFREY S. YOUNG
Chairman
ISA Board of Directors

LORI M. ANDERSON
President and CEO
ISA
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RALLYING FUTURE WORKERS through Sign Manufacturing Day

There is no getting around it: the sign, graphics and visual communications workforce is getting older. This aligns with what is happening in all facets of manufacturing, so we are not alone. An innovative program, Sign Manufacturing Day, engages students and potential employees to tout the benefits of a career in the sign, graphics and visual communications industry.

24% more students said they would consider a career in manufacturing following a company tour, and Alfonso found a career...

Alfonso Guida joined SignTech after participating in Sign Manufacturing Day. The tour opened Guida’s eyes to an opportunity to continue to learn and grow a career in welding. He applied for a job, and within a few weeks of that visit, Guida was fully entrenched in the industry, turning his welding training into a career as a sign fabricator/welder.

“I’m doing much more than what I had learned in school. I’m learning every day. It’s a really great career.”

—ALFONSO GUIDA, SIGNTECH

Hear Alfonso’s experience: www.signs.org/Alfonso

15 participating companies began internships, co-op programs or hired students, and Sarah found future workers...

In the year since we participated in Sign Manufacturing Day, we have placed roughly 10 students who are currently working part-time while attending school. We hope to have them join our team full-time upon graduation. We are excited that Wallace Community College is also starting up a new sheet metal curriculum that will offer us more students and future recruiting!

—SARAH NORRIS, CUMMINGS RESOURCES

3,000 students toured more than 40 companies at 46 sign manufacturing facilities throughout the United States and Canada.

Let your company shine on October 6, 2017! Participate in Sign Manufacturing Day: www.signs.org/mfgday

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ENGAGING EMPLOYEES with industry-specific education

Programs like Sign Manufacturing Day that support skilled workers are just the beginning. Once those new employees arrive at your company, training specific to their jobs in the sign, graphics and visual communications industry can begin. And the training must continue when new technologies emerge or when employees are tapped for advancement into new positions. ISA educational programs can help you onboard new employees, empower existing employees and retain future leaders.

269% more ISA online learning courses were completed in 2016 over 2015, and Jessica learned online...

When Jessica St. Laurent joined Poyant as a designer, she was new to the industry. She used ISA’s online learning classes as a teaching tool to better understand her work.

“I have found that ISA’s online learning courses are very relatable to the work I do every day. I learned so much about the construction process and what happens to my designs after I create them.”

—JESSICA ST. LAURENT, POYANT

Wake your new employees up with online courses! www.Signs.org/online

ISA DIGITAL BADGES RECOGNIZE KEY SKILLS

1,417 students earned an ISA Digital Badge, a visual acknowledgment of their learning and achievement in one of 15 credential assessments from NOCTI, an occupational proficiency testing organization. Students can use the digital badge to catch an employer’s attention when applying for their first jobs.

ENCOURAGING SUCCESS FOR CURRENT EMPLOYEES

72% of existing employees chose the 21st Century Skills for Workplace Success skills assessment.

2,525 seats filled in the ISA Sign Expo educational sessions

50 online learning courses across 8 tracks

79% more participants on live webinars over 2015

Sleep on it: What could ISA provide you to support your onboarding needs for employees who are new to the industry?

Email mmc@Signs.org
through advocacy at the federal, state and local levels

Unreasonable local sign codes can restrict business for both sign buyer/users and the sign, graphics and visual communications industry. There are additional regulations and other requirements at the state and federal levels. ISA works at all three levels to improve the regulatory environment for the industry.

communities benefited from ISA assistance with their sign codes, and Alex fought a local permitting process...

For more than a year, Alex Perry worked to streamline Chicago’s arduous and lengthy sign permitting process, which required city council approval before a sign could be installed. Perry found support from ISA’s advocacy team, the Illinois Sign Association and the Small Business Advocacy Council (SBAC), a coalition of Chicago area chambers of commerce and local merchants. Alex won!

"Being able to say, ‘ISA stands behind us on this. Here’s their statement.’ It lends a lot of credibility. It was a great partnership."

—ALEX PERRY, RIGHT WAY SIGNS

Are you struggling with a sign code issue in your community? Email signhelp@signs.org

Opposition to a federal rule...
The U.S. Department of Labor’s new overtime rules would have significantly raised the number of employees able to qualify for overtime. Without enough time to adequately prepare for such a dramatic increase, ISA opposed this rule. A federal judge stayed implementation of the rule pending a court case.

Defeat of a state mandate...
South Carolina’s requirement for an additional license to install any signs with concrete, structural steel or electrical work would have been devastating for sign companies. ISA and members of the Southern States Sign Association worked for nearly a year to permanently exempt sign companies from the licensing requirements. The bill was signed into law by the state’s governor in September 2016.

Positive local changes...
Calvert County, Maryland’s local officials worked with ISA to ensure a new sign code complied with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Reed v. Town of Gilbert. Continued work allowed EMCs, which had been essentially prohibited previously, to be used.

Rest easy knowing that ISA continues work in major metropolitan cities, including Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Phoenix, Chicago and Louisville.
SPURRING REGULATORY CHANGE

through education of local and government officials

In the wake of Reed v. Town of Gilbert, planners and local officials are hungry for information on crafting better sign codes. To educate local planners and other community officials about crafting reasonable sign codes and complying with Reed, ISA offers resources that resonate with planners.

opportunities for ISA to work with the Sign Research Foundation to support reasonable sign codes and regulations, and Brett found valuable information to improve his city’s sign code...

The Sign Research Foundation (SRF), formerly the Signage Foundation, Inc., offers a rich cache of new content and cements its reputation as the leading resource for research related to the sign, graphics and visual communications industry.

I found SRF’s research on temporary signs to be very helpful in distinguishing what should and should not be in the sign code for the city I work for. Due to this information, I was able to get the result desired by the city without the potential challenges.

—BRETT ANGELL, CITY OF ANDOVER, MN

Newly expanded and enhanced research library: www.signresearch.org

1,300 planners attended live-streamed webinars, presentations at community meetings and Planning for Sign Code Success™ workshops.

2 NEW ONLINE COURSES FOR PLANNERS...

ISA created videos on “Regulating EMCs” and “Legal Issues in Sign Codes” to educate hundreds of planners.

250+ communities and 8 states use ISA’s EMC brightness standards, now revised with case studies. www.signs.org/EMCs

350 planners attended ISA’s presentation on Reed v. Town of Gilbert at the APA National Conference.

Don’t burn the candle at both ends. Your local planner can get information directly from ISA’s newsletter, “Vital Signs,” which encourages them to seek expert guidance on sign, graphics and visual communications topics. Planners can sign up at newsroom.signs.org/vitalsigns

90

90

2017
STIMULATING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES
by empowering sign companies and informing sign buyer/users

Research in a number of formats helped companies in the sign, graphics and visual communications industry to benchmark and set future business goals. And new videos revolutionized the way that sign buyer/users perceived our industry. Seeing what’s ahead takes initiative and insight, and ISA resources help companies better prepare for a robust and rewarding future.

3,263 people used 3 new ISA videos about the industry to educate customers and to onboard employees

“Life of a Sign” promotes the importance of signs to a business and explains the process that goes into developing a sign.
www.signs.org/videos
To customize the ending with your company logo, contact mmc@signs.org.

“ISA Sign Manufacturing Day 2016” recaps the successful 2016 event to promote the great career options to teachers and students.
www.signs.org/mfgday

“Building Safe & Vibrant Communities” helps local officials and planners understand the resources available to them when sign code issues arise.
www.signs.org/planners

These videos would not have been as effective without the excellent footage that was provided by our members. We need your help to produce more videos!

Contact mmc@signs.org to offer footage

66% of sign industry companies predict double-digit growth in 2017
Source: Sign, Graphics and Visual Communications Industry 2016 Pulse

IMPROVING MARGINS
COMPANIES FEEL CONFIDENT WITH RESPECT TO THE ON-PREMISE SIGN INDUSTRY’S FUTURE
Overall, the industry is feeling optimistic, with 60 percent feeling positive about the industry’s future prospects, compared with 48 percent in 2014.

COMPANIES PLAN TO BUY EQUIPMENT IN 2017
As technology advancements continue to impact the business environment, companies are investing in new equipment and technologies to stay ahead of their clients’ changing demand.

More than half—54 percent—of companies reported growth that exceeded ten percent in the past six months, compared to 40 percent of companies in 2014.

2014 2016
60% 48% +

69% of companies would probably or definitely buy new equipment in 2017

At the sign, graphics and visual communications industry’s largest event, ISA Sign Expo, professionals explore innovative products on a diverse trade show floor, nurture relationships with partners at a variety of networking events, and hear valuable insights and future trends from thought leaders.

200,705 square feet of exhibit floor space showcasing cutting-edge products, and Jeff bought equipment...

—JEFF GLIDDEN, BURR SIGNS

Find vendors throughout the year! www.signexpo.org/products

THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM
Subscribe to our YouTube channel, “IntlSignAssoc,” to catch videos as soon as they’re released.

ISA Sign Expo is huge and allows me to seek out new technology and see what’s down the road. We’re big on developing relationships, and ISA Sign Expo allows us to do that.

—BRAD NICELY, SYCAMORE SIGN SERVICE

From subcontractors to suppliers, attendees energized relationships at one of the largest ISA Sign Expos in a decade, and Brad found a network...

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200,705
ATTENDEES

600
EXHIBITORS

35
Participants make connections with peers, previous ISA Elite and the ISA Board of Directors. Already, some of these young leaders are serving in roles on ISA Affiliated Association boards and committees. And some Affiliated Associations have launched their own programs.

Set your alarm! ISA Sign Expo 2018 is a month early next year in Orlando, March 22–24.

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RAISING CREDIBILITY by fostering key industry partnerships

Pardon our #humblebrag, but these are some of the ways that the industry is being noticed by outside industries and organizations. Valuable programs and inspired designs have been winning strategies for our member companies.

234 MILLION total media impressions from monthly articles placed in the three largest industry trade publications, and communications channels are reaching increasingly wider audiences...

This same report that you’re reading, ISA’s Progress Report, was an effective communications piece in 2015, winning an award from the American Graphic Design Awards from Graphic Design USA and a gold distinction in the Annual Report category from Association TRENDS magazine.

Increasingly more social media followers...

3,600 followers
13,000 followers
6,000
followers on Twitter

AN OUTSTANDING ADVOCACY INITIATIVE...
The National Journal honored ISA’s advocacy initiative with its Innovation Award, presented to Washington’s most creative and solutions-oriented government affairs offices.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS TO EMULATE...
Two of the programs aimed at finding and recruiting the next generation of sign, graphics and visual communications employees were recognized during the Power of A Awards from the American Society of Association Executives. The ISA Elite program and the ISA Digital Badges for Students both were held up as programs to emulate.

RESPECTED EVENT COMMUNICATIONS...
ISA Sign Expo’s conference brochure and print ad were honored with two silver awards at the Davey Awards. The IAEE Art of the Show Award honored ISA for its ISA Sign Expo 2016 poster brochure.

Wake up, sleepy head! We’re revamping the www.sings.org website and email communications to shine a light on the best qualities of our industry, making them easier to read with more targeted information.