The International Sign Association

The Secret to Success in the Sign, Graphics and Visual Communications Industries

Help with Codes and Regulations

As a national sign company that works in multiple jurisdictions, having ISA and Texas Sign Association assistance with codes and regulations is invaluable for Gregg Hollenberg, CEO of National Signs in Houston.

State legislative action can have an equally important impact on a sign and graphics company. In Texas, where National Sign is based, the legislature meets every two years—and electrical licensing makes a frequent appearance. National Sign is also a member of the ISA Affiliated Association Texas Sign Association (TSA).

“It’s a hot-button issue for TSA,” said Hollenberg, who is serving as the state sign association’s president. “Licensing is a picky thing for us. Every single sign company that offers electrical signs needs to be licensed.”

ISA and TSA also help build relationships with end user groups. ISA’s David Hickey and Paul Rohls, a TSA member, recently participated in the Texas Rural Challenge, an event that helps build small businesses in the state. Participants heard about the key role that signs play in economic development.

STATS • FACTS

56% of ISA member company CEOs predict double-digit growth in 2017, according to the ISA Confidence Report.
Knowledge About the Industry

Taylor Blanchett, sales executive with Blanchett Neon in Edmonton, Alberta, is a relative newcomer to the sign, graphics and visual communications industries. She joined the business founded by her grandfather, but had majored in music in college.

When Blanchett Neon landed a large contract to retrofit 120 bank branches over a 5,000-kilometer area with LEDs, she came on board to coordinate the project and found a career she loves—and now wants to grow in.

“I do a lot of our marketing here,” she said. “I put our association membership on our letterhead and on our quotes. It adds to our credibility, the fact that you’re a member of a state, national and international association.”

But it’s not just the value that comes from marketing. As a relative newcomer to the industry herself, she has found the importance of networking and learning from her peers.

Despite jumping into the deep end with the massive bank project, she still feels there is a learning curve—and she’s found much of her growth comes from asking others, especially those she meets through the associations.

“There is a lot of value in sharing the experience and the advice for someone just starting out. I think it’s a really useful and a great training tool. It helps you succeed further in the sign industry.”

Growing a Career

Brad Nicely had been around the sign, graphics and visual communications industries for years when he launched Sycamore Sign Service in 2011. Despite his experience, he still found he needed advice from others—especially since he was new to business ownership.

“I was making phone calls on a regular basis, getting pointers and tips from other owners,” he said. “The people who were most willing to help me and advise me were members of ISA and ISA Affiliated Associations.”

These days, Nicely, whose company focuses heavily on installation for national sign companies, is a member of ISA and both the Mid-South Sign Association and the Southern States Sign Association.

Networking is important to business owners like Nicely. “I don’t talk to owners that much unless I purposely call them,” he said. “If we’re doing a project, our main contact is the project manager. But connecting with owners allows me to learn from their mistakes. It might prevent me from making those same mistakes.”

Growing Together

As a large, global company that has focused on aerial lifts and work trucks and been in business since 1929, Altec certainly can consider itself an expert. But when it came to the sign, graphics and visual communications industries, the company had much to learn. So when Altec decided to expand in that area in 2012, it wanted to listen.

“The biggest benefit of ISA membership is the access to sign installers and manufacturers and anyone who would use our equipment,” said Mark Kruger, Altec area manager. “Exhibiting at ISA International Sign Expo was a way to meet folks and expose them to our products and to get experience of what they do. Not having the tribal knowledge of the sign industry, it was great to be able to talk to members to develop the next products.”

By learning more about the industry—and drawing upon the experience of sign installers and manufacturers—Altec has been able to alter its products to better serve the industry. With the LS63 aerial platform, Altec increased in the overall platform size, changed to a single handle control and moved the jib mounting.

“None of those were things that we came up with; it was all from the crafts folks in the industry. It was people who had been clamoring for change.”

Kruger promises new products at ISA International Sign Expo 2017, more “innovations that are on the products that have come directly from the sign industry.”

As Altec moved into the sign, graphics and visual communications industry, joining ISA “helped us get a foothold in the industry,” Kruger said. “The benefits that we’ve seen from going to ISA International Sign Expo have been dramatic. The amount of foot traffic and the availability of people to talk to has been a big benefit.”

Kruger sees benefits of membership no matter how long a company has been in the industry. “The biggest benefit is the sharing of information, whether it be an innovation or a different way to hang a sign, a different style of lighting that may work well on one type of job. You can’t get that information anywhere else but at a trade show where you can learn from each other.”

Membership certainly brings benefits—and the greatest is business success. Find the ISA Affiliated Association nearest you at www.signs.org/affiliatedassociations.