Four Action Steps To Maximize Benefits of ISA International Sign Expo 2019

ISA International Sign Expo 2019 is in the books—but in some ways, the work is just beginning. Connections were made. New products seen. Insights learned.

If you haven’t brought all of those benefits back and turned them into action, the time to do so is now. Here’s a guide to maximizing the best of ISA International Sign Expo 2019—and using it to help build your business throughout the year.

1. Reconnect with new contacts. It’s a story that comes up almost annually: someone met a connection at ISA Sign Expo and within a few months needed them in some way. Maybe they needed a product that they didn’t know existed until meeting an exhibitor. Perhaps they needed an installer in an area they never had worked in before. What will your connection be? If you lose track of the people you met, you may never know.

ISA International Sign Expo 2019 brought together planners, architects, designers, sign company professionals and suppliers/manufacturers. Go back through those business cards you picked up and connect. Ask about business opportunities. See how you can help them with their next project or provide information about sign code issues. Don’t wait until next year to try to see if you run into that person again.

And while you’re at it, connect more deeply with ISA. Follow us on social media. Connect on LinkedIn. Send a note to tell us how ISA Sign Expo 2019 benefited your business. (Send it to MMC@signs.org.)

One of the most impressive connections was made during the Women Leading the Industry breakfast, which brought a few hundred women into a room for brainstorming, discussion and inspiration. At the end of the meeting, each table was filled with women exchanging business cards. But WLI is an ongoing initiative. Dive in at www.signs.org/wli.
2 Share what you’ve learned. Have you held a staff meeting to share the most impressive products you saw or insight you learned at the event? If not, get it on the agenda. And if more people from your company attended, be sure to have everyone share. Engage the entire staff on what idea is most exciting—and how it might grow your business. If staff meetings aren’t your best form of communication, consider writing a blog post for the company intranet. The key point is to communicate and invite feedback.

Make sure specific teams get deep dives on the areas that are most meaningful. For instance, if you attended the pre-conference event on selling wide-format print, make sure your sales team knows what you learned. If you were inspired by new products on the tradeshow floor, engage your leadership team to see how those products might impact your business—and the price of not being at the forefront of those innovations.

The company package—allowing all registered attendees from the same company to attend unlimited education sessions—was a big hit in 2019. Make sure that the value of having a number of employees in the education sessions trickles throughout the organization. And while you’re at it, connect with ISA’s workforce development programs to take the education throughout the year. Learn more at www.signs.org/training.

3 Seek out more information on the products you saw. With 600 exhibitors—many of whom introduced new products on the tradeshow floor—there are bound to be a number that can help your business grow. Pull out those brochures and contact the exhibitors to ask for more information. Perhaps you already had a relationship with a sales person. Give them a call to talk about what you saw at the show. And open relationships with new exhibitors, too.

With three jam-packed days on the tradeshow floor—and more than 235,000-square feet to cover—it’s a lot to take in. Consider those three days the start—not the end—of your product search. Make or take those calls from sales professionals—and begin looking at the products that you must have this year.

As with education, don’t forget to ask for employees’ input. What did they see that they think might be useful to explore? They may talk more closely with customers—and therefore have a better idea of what their customers are seeking.

While you’re at it, seek out summer and fall shows from ISA Affiliated Associations (www.signs.org/affiliates). They provide more intimate opportunities to connect with manufacturers, suppliers and distributors.

4 Plan for ISA International Sign Expo 2020. And while you’re at it, circle April 1-4, 2020, on your calendar. That’s when ISA Sign Expo 2020 will be held in Orlando, Fla. April 1 is a pre-conference day, with the tradeshow open April 2-4. And it will be bigger than ever, thanks to the co-location with Impressions Expo, formerly the Imprinted Sportswear Show. Impressions Expo will feature products that may provide yet another expansion opportunity.

ISA International Sign Expo 2019 provided the spark to help you take your business further. It’s not hard to take those benefits throughout the year to make 2019 one for the record books.