

# NEWSLETTER

FALL 2016

# SIGNS & BEYOND

A QUARTERLY UPDATE FOR MEMBERS  
ON KEY INDUSTRY INITIATIVES AND INSIGHTS



## SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP ISSUE




**INSIDE:** See how  
members are using ISA and  
its Affiliated Associations to  
recharge their businesses.



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

**SIGNS MEAN BUSINESS**

[www.signs.org](http://www.signs.org)



Meeting business goals can be challenging work. To build your business, you're tasked with a broad range of tasks — from acquiring sign permits and designing eye-catching graphics, to searching for qualified workers and building relationships with your customers.

**The International Sign Association and its Affiliated Associations can help you accomplish your goals.**

With membership, your business can thrive. Recent survey results show that industry companies are more productive, more profitable and more knowledgeable than their peers when they utilize their membership. Companies across the world are putting the power of ISA's resources to work for them.

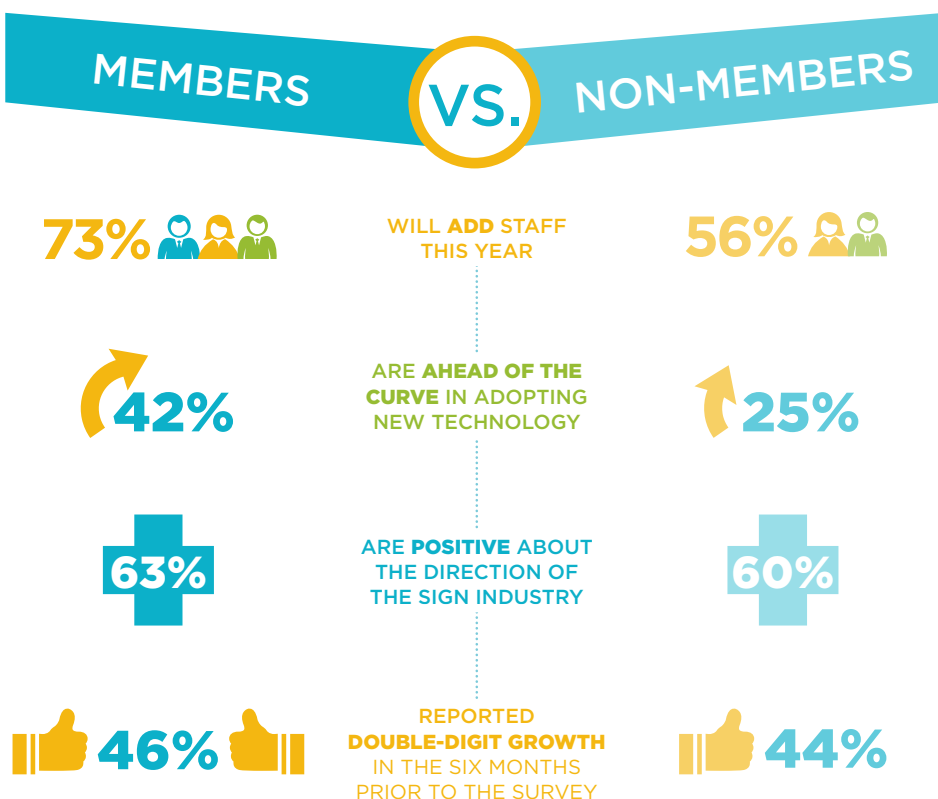
**AFTER ALL...  
SIGNS MEAN BUSINESS!**



# THE VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP

The direct experiences of professionals in the sign, graphics and visual communications industry give us a glimpse into where the industry as a whole is headed. ISA conducted an industry-wide survey, April–July 2016, gathering responses from local and national sign companies, as well as industry suppliers and distributors, to better understand the issues that are affecting their bottom lines. This survey report, called the *2016 Pulse*\*, shows that ISA member companies, in particular, are better prepared for a robust and rewarding future.

\*Members can access the *2016 Pulse* for free at [www.signs.org/stateofindustry](http://www.signs.org/stateofindustry).



# POWERFUL PARTNERS PUT US TO WORK FOR YOU

When local custom sign companies join an ISA Affiliated Association, their membership with ISA is automatically included. That's two great memberships for the price of one.



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION



# THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP



## ALEX PERRY

**President  
Right Way Signs  
Chicago, IL**

As a former vice president of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, Alex Perry understands the value of associations. So when he and his father launched Right Way Signs, he quickly joined the Illinois Sign Association.

"The value of an association is access to experts like government affairs people and others who can address your concerns and help get your message out."

Nowhere was that more evident than in Chicago, where the permitting process seemed like a maze. It often took months for new businesses to receive permits. And it was costing Right Way money. Perry said he had to hire two employees just to oversee permitting.

"The problem was the process, the length it took and the way the city enforced it," Perry said. "We lost a lot of customers that didn't want to go through that process. They would just roll the dice and put up a sign without a permit."

Perry felt that cutting that risky corner did not align with his business philosophy of doing things the "right way."

The issue also hit on the company's reputation as permit expeditors that would promise to get permits more quickly — leading some of Right Way's customers to question the sign company's capabilities.

"The client is usually pretty patient the first few months and then impatience starts to grow. If they call the city to check in on the permit, the city will throw the sign company under the bus without actually knowing where it is. It's a very interesting lack of process."

"The value of an association is access to experts like government affairs people and others who can address your concerns and help get your message out."

Perry started talking to peers about the issue and found that many of them were confronted with the same problems. Leaning back to his former Chamber work, he began trying to figure out how to make things better. That's when he brought the Illinois Sign Association and the International Sign Association into the conversation.

After many months of work, the coalition, which included the two ISAs, was able to successfully streamline the permitting process with a law passed by the Chicago City Council and signed by the mayor. Now, the time spent waiting for a permit in Chicago has been reduced by 50–80 percent. "Having the connection on the state level provides a great cheerleader and a coalition builder. Having access to the International Sign Association also was key. It was a great partnership. Even when I worked at the Chamber, I didn't see things work that well. The overall membership experience, from my perspective, is just perfect."

# THE POW

## THE POWER OF INSIGHT



### **BILL ULINE**

**General Manager and Vice President  
Sign Faces LLC  
Pelham, AL**

As general manager and vice president of Sign Faces LLC, Bill Uline has his hands on a vast array of projects, and he often turns to ISA and its Affiliated Associations for answers.

"ISA provides so many different resources and serves multiple functions for the sign industry," he said. "It represents us at the federal level and at the local level with regards to new sign ordinances, permitting and legislative issues. ISA also provides numerous educational seminars and webinars that are directed not only to sign companies, but to suppliers and manufacturers as well. These are just some of the opportunities that ISA offers."

As a long-time exhibitor at ISA International Sign Expo, Sign Faces has the opportunity to connect with customers and potential customers, suppliers and manufacturers. But for Uline, ISA Sign Expo is also a place to gain more insight into new products and processes in this ever-changing industry.

"When I first got into this business, we weren't very technologically advanced," he said. "I've seen the industry grow from traced paper patterns and paint brushes to CNC machines, digital printers,

LEDs and EMCs. The dynamics of this industry have changed so much from the past, and it is evolving so much quicker than it ever has in my memory. Every year, there are new developments — the latest and greatest the industry has to offer."

**"It's not until you become involved as a member, that you begin to realize the true value of ISA..."**

Uline also serves the industry as the chairman of the ISA electrical subcommittee that works with the NFPA and UL regarding National Electric Code and UL requirements "to ensure we are manufacturing safe and compliant electrical signage. We're always looking at new products and how new regulations could be affecting our industry, and making proposals to current regulations to better serve our industry — most recently working with the 2017 NEC Code."

Sign Faces is a member of several ISA Affiliated Associations, which Uline sees as another benefit, "allowing for greater support, collaboration and networking at the local and national levels."

So what is the value of membership to Uline? "It's not until you become involved as a member that you begin to realize the true value of ISA and the Affiliated Associations and what they have to offer. They are here not to just support the sign industry, but to support the people and the companies that make up this industry."

# VER OF MEM

## THE POWER OF SHARING



### TAYLOR BLANCHETT

**Sales Executive**

**Blanchett Neon**

**Edmonton, AB, Canada**

Taylor Blanchett had no intention of joining the sign, graphics and visual communications industry, majoring in music in college. But 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 wants to grow in.

"It's just such a unique industry and there are so many aspects to it," she said. "I enjoy all the different things I can do. It's so interesting to drive around and see all the projects that you built from a piece of paper to 50-feet high."

The company, founded by her great-grandfather, is a member of the Alberta Sign Association, the Sign Association of Canada and ISA.

"I do a lot of our marketing here," she said. "I put our association memberships on our letterhead and on our quotes. It adds to our credibility, the fact that we're a member of state, national and international associations."

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 with others in the industry and learning from her peers.

"There is a lot of value in sharing experience and advice for someone just starting out. I think it's a really useful and great training tool."

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.

"It's always great to talk about how they've overcome situations or faced challenges. It can really help you succeed further in the sign and graphics industry."

"There is a lot of value in sharing experience and advice for someone just starting out. I think it's a really useful and a great training tool."

# BERSHIP

## THE POWER OF EXPERIENCE



### MARK KRUGER

**Lights and Signs Sales Manager  
Altec Industries  
Birmingham, AL**

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 industry, the company had much to learn. So when Altec decided to expand into that market arena in 2012, it wanted to listen.

"The biggest benefit of ISA membership is access to sign installers and manufacturers and anyone who would use our equipment," said Mark Kruger, Altec Lights and Signs sales manager. "Exhibiting at the ISA International Sign Expo is a great way to meet customers and expose them to our products. It also allows us to learn from the end user to find out exactly what they're looking for in an aerial device."

Altec is also a member of — and exhibits at — a number of ISA Affiliated Association events.

By learning more about the industry — and drawing upon the experience of sign installers and manufacturers — Altec has been able to alter its legacy products to better serve the industry. With new products like the LS63 aerial unit, Altec

increased the overall platform size, featured a single-handle controller and changed the mounting of the jib winch package so it's less intrusive for the operator. "None of those improvements were things that we came up with; it was all from people we talked with in the industry. It was from people who had been looking for change."

Kruger promises new products at the upcoming ISA International Sign Expo 2017 in Las Vegas. There will be more "innovation on aerial products specific to the sign industry."

**"None of those improvements were things that we came up with; it was all from people we talked with in the industry."**

As Altec moved into the sign, graphics and visual communications industry, joining ISA and many of its Affiliated Associations "helped us gain valuable information regarding the industry," Kruger said. "The benefits that we've seen from going to ISA Sign Expo have been dramatic. The amount of foot traffic and the availability of customers to collaborate with has been a great advantage."

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 new ways to hang a sign, operators' specific use of equipment or feedback on end users' preferred equipment options, Altec is always looking for ways we can enhance our products to make jobs easier on our customers. We see great value in that feedback, and trade shows are an excellent way for us to learn from other industry experts."



# THE POWER OF CONNECTIONS



## DAN CRANNIE

### President

### Signs by Crannie

### Flint, MI and Fort Myers, FL

For Dan Crannie, the connections with peer — and competitor — companies are invaluable.

"Just because we're all in the same business, it doesn't make every sign company your competition. We're able to help each other out. There's a lot of cooperation as a result of relationships made through the associations."

Signs by Crannie has offices in Michigan and Florida and is a member of two ISA Affiliated Associations — the Midwest Sign Association (where Crannie is vice president) and the Southern States Sign Association.

His company has been in growth mode, moving the Michigan location into a larger facility. "The success has come by trying new things and venturing into different markets," he said. "Membership has really helped drive new business to us. There are a lot of sign shops that don't have the capabilities that we do. So we've partnered with some of them and helped out association members with projects that were beyond their abilities."

When sign companies look to outsource projects to his company, Crannie sees that ISA, MSA and SSSA membership "adds to the credibility and the trust.

A lot of them trust us because we are members of the associations. It just adds an extra level."

It has also meant hiring and, as with many companies in the industry, finding workers has been "pretty difficult lately." So Crannie has opted to "grow our own." Participating in ISA Sign Manufacturing Day in 2015, he learned about a program at the local high school which placed interns for a few weeks. One intern in particular worked out well, and Crannie has hired him to work after school doing odd jobs. "When he has time, he oversees the work of fabricators so that he can learn more. He seems interested in a fabricating career in the future."

"I would say the return on my investment is severalfold every year, just from what we pick up at tabletop events and the association meetings."

Crannie is hoping to use the relationship with the local school to find more students. "Hopefully, with each session, we're able to handpick a few that show potential."

Writing membership checks each year for two associations certainly pays off, Crannie believes. "I would say the return on my investment is severalfold every year, just from what we pick up at tabletop events and the association meetings. There is so much value in knowing others that are dealing with some of the same struggles that you are. Before I became a member, I felt like I was fighting all these battles by myself. When I got more involved with the associations, I found a lot of companies were struggling with the same issues I was. There is a lot of years of experience in these associations. That's been really helpful."

# EMPOWER YOUR BUSINESS AND PUT ISA TO WORK FOR YOU.

Knowledge

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Networking

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Advocacy

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Events



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

1001 N. Fairfax Street, Ste. 301

Alexandria, VA 22314



@ISAsigns



#ISAProud

