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By Alex Marcheschi

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EXPERIENCE MUTOH'S NEW ALL-IN-ONE 24" ECO-SOLVENT PRINTER/CUTTER COMBO



MUTOH announces the All NEW XpertJet C641SR Pro 24" Desktop Eco-Solvent Printer/Cutter Combo. This printer is perfect for a wide range of applications such as stickers, HTV transfers, vehicle signage and decals, labels, wall decals, posters, banners, and more. Print and cut a 24-inch roll of media and operate at speeds up to twice as fast as its closest competitors. The All-In-One XPJ-C641SR Pro benefits from MUTOH's renowned reliability and Made in Japan quality, making it the perfect choice for anyone looking to get into the print game.

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EDITOR'S COLUMN

BY ALEX MARCHESCHI

AGENDA

Note: Events listed below are subject to change. Please check show sites for the most up-to-date information.

APRIL 2025

APRIL 23-25:

Set for Las Vegas, ISA International Sign Expo 2025 will feature everything you need to be successful in the sign, graphics, print and visual communications industry. signexpo.org.

AUGUST 2025

JULY 30-AUG 2:

Mid-South Sign Association's SignConnexion 2025 will take place in Mobile, Alabama as many of the region's big players in signage get together to discuss industry trends. midsouthsign.org



Listening Locally

The heart of the sign industry has a story to tell.

It's difficult to truly have your finger on the pulse of an industry as expansive as the sign industry. There are many different lanes and avenues in this market, a left turn toward digital signage will leave you in a land completely different from a right turn toward channel letters. And don't forget about the detours to print-based operations, vehicle wraps, ADA compliant signage and seemingly countless other routes.

For this reason, it's extremely valuable for us here at SBI to have eyes and ears on the ground, interacting with the movers and shakers of this industry. That's why I'm so excited to welcome Wendy Graves to the SBI team as a correspondent. I've attended a handful of Make It Happen Signage Academy bootcamp sessions hosted by Graves and her colleagues and each time I've walked away equipped with new, great industry knowledge.

Graves' connections with sign shop owners and employees across North America are substantial, earned in a grassroots fashion. I'm going to be relying on her to point me in the right directions when it

comes to features in the magazine and stories to keep an eye on. To make a sports analogy, Graves' role is similar to that of a baseball scout for a Major League Baseball team. She might find a great story for us at a small five-person shop in Indiana or at a massive facility with a rolodex of thousands of big-name clients.

The important thing is that she's helping us take a step toward truly covering the heart of the signage industry. The theme of this issue is new technology and if you're a sign shop owner or employee, you know that new tech moves the needle for clients. A super thin, halo-lit cast metal channel letter may be available in one market, but nowhere to be found in a different one.

One region of the country may have a better grasp on digital signage than other regions. Content management systems may be running networks of digital signage in one area, while manually created sign messaging may be relied upon in other areas. You may go on vacation or a work trip and see some signage you've never seen in your region, and it's our job to make sure we make the in-

dustry aware of it all. You get the point, we want to know which tech is sticking in which areas.

One thing I've been noticing lately is a bit of an "old school" vs "new school" battle amongst shops across the country. However, a lot of the old school shops have embraced new business strategies and technology in order to adapt to the times. Family businesses that once relied on veteran members of the family to lead the company are passing the baton to younger members of their family or organization.

It's exciting to see new thoughts, new tech and new installations hitting the scene on a daily basis and we want to know about them all. Please join me in welcoming Graves to our team, we'll be bringing you tangible stories from the field and staying on top of the latest trends. ●



ALEX MARCHESCHI
Editor-in-Chief

Photo: Make It Happen Signage Academy

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NOVA POLYMERS LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

THE NEW WEBSITE IS TAILORED to cater to the needs of architects, designers and sign fabricators, providing easy access to essential sections and resources required for specifying or creating 100% Braille/ADA-compliant signage. The website also prioritizes key content and organizes it for seamless accessibility based on the designer or fabricator's interest and requirements.

Emphasizing Nova's dedication to ADA compliance and inclusiveness, the new website showcases the company's innovative products, including the groundbreaking world's first clear photopolymer sign material, reinforcing its position as the ultimate authority in photopolymer braille and ADA-compliant signage. Additionally, the site highlights the diverse range of exterior and interior photopolymer substrates and the user-friendly sign-making system, reflecting Nova's commitment to ongoing innovation.

Architects and designers can easily access ADA signage training, BIM objects for architectural enhancement and design inspiration. Fabricators can see how the Nova Polymer sign making system guarantees 100% Braille/ADA compliance, browse the product catalogue, or access the collection of SOP quality guidelines, manuals, troubleshooting guides, and SDS sheets. Moreover, those seeking a list certified polymers Braille/ADA sign fabricators utilizing Nova's premium materials can find this information under the Preferred Fabricators tab. ●

NP Nova Polymers



EPSON ANNOUNCES ITS FIRST DIRECT-TO-FILM PRINTER

A MID THE GROWING POPULARITY of the direct-to-film (DTFilm) market, Epson launched the new SureColor® G-Series product line and its first wide-format DTFilm printer – the SureColor G6070. Designed to address the wants and needs of garment decorators looking for a versatile solution to embellish a wide variety of materials in an efficient manner with minimal cost, the SureColor G6070 is engineered to deliver reliability, ease of use, minimal maintenance and consistent print quality.

“Many print service providers are already using DTFilm in their shop, yet are spending much of their resources maintaining their equipment, rather than growing their business,” said Andreas Goehring, director, Professional Imaging, Epson America, Inc.

“No matter what market we enter, Epson strives to bring reliability, accessibility and print quality to customers, and that is no different with the SureColor G6070. This model is designed to open new doors for apparel decorators looking to explore new and creative ways to produce stunning apparel.”

The compact SureColor G6070 features a front-loading media design that supports a generous 35.4-inch print width to fit more transfers per roll and enables the production of oversized graphics. Leveraging a PrecisionCore® Micro TFP® printhead with Nozzle Verification Technology, as well as a large-capacity sealed-ink-pack system featuring new UltraChrome® DF inks, it consistently delivers professional-grade prints with vibrant colors and crisp, detailed clarity. ●



SNA DISPLAYS RETROFITS DIGITAL SIGNAGE AT D.C.'S KEY TRANSIT HUB

SNA DISPLAYS provided a video display upgrade to the parking garage and bus terminal entrance at Washington, D.C.'s Union Station, a multi-modal transportation hub that sees 30 to 40 million visitors a year. The new LED video technology replaced outdated digital signage and was installed as part of Union Station Redevelopment Corporation's (USRC) near-term modernization efforts to improve the commuter and customer experience.

USRC oversees Washington's Union Station property on behalf of the U.S. federal government, while also operating the Union Station parking garage and bus terminal operations. The Union Station parking garage has the largest rental car operation outside of the metropolitan area airports and is the

only intercity bus terminal in Washington, D.C. USRC selected a 33-foot-long LED screen from SNA Displays to greet commuters at the entrance between the station's bus terminal and the train concourse that houses Amtrak and the commuter rail lines MARC and VRE. The display is wall-mounted just below ground level and viewable to visitors transitioning down escalators into the station from street level.

Measuring approximately 5 x 33 (384 x 2,560 pixels), the new 3.9 mm EMPIRE™ Exterior video screen is used to welcome visitors, advertise local events, and deliver timely, relevant information to busy commuters on the go. In addition to manufacturing and installing the new LED screen, SNA Displays provided demolition for the old technology. ●

GENERAL FORMULATIONS APPOINTS NEW VP OF PURCHASING & PRODUCTION

GENERAL FORMULATIONS HAS announced the promotion of Dan Collins to Vice President of Purchasing & Production. Collins is a passionate leader with more than 20 years of experience in operations, manufacturing and multi-channel product distribution with P&L ownership.

Since joining General Formulations in November 2023 as Finishing Plant Manager, Collins has played a pivotal role in streamlining production operations and driving continuous improvement.

Collins' experience includes notable achievements, such as managing the opening of Amazon fulfillment center spanning millions of square feet, where his team achieved a record-breaking inbound and outbound package handling volume within a single day.

"Dan's entrepreneurial mindset, coupled with his extensive experience in operations and his commitment to fostering strong team dynamics, make him the ideal candidate for this role," said Mike Clay, President of General Formulations. "We are confident that under his leadership, GF will continue to enhance its operational excellence and deliver exceptional value to our customers worldwide." ●





SIGN SHOW



MEDIA

Magnum Magnetics DigiMaxx EnGage

DigiMaxx EnGage by Magnum Magnetics is a magnetic receptive media constructed out of a high-quality, easy-to-install material that is perfect for any large-format printing project. This lightweight, durable solution offers a blend of performance, print quality and affordability. The magnetically receptive surface simplifies design flexibility while delivering vibrant, clear visuals that leave a lasting impact. Key features of EnGage magnetic media include: high print quality, large format compatibility, a durable and easy-to-clean surface, hassle-free installation and universal compatibility.

magnummagnetics.com

CHANNEL LETTERS

Gemini Cast Metal Halo Lit Signage

Gemini Cast Metal Halo Lit Signage combines the look of made-to-order cast dimensional letters and logos with the distinctive visibility of halo lighting. This creates unique profiles with depth and permanency. The Cast Metal Halo Lit Signage is available in bronze or aluminum with sculpted, prismatic, flat or round face options with 60 different finish/color options. Five color options are available for halo lighting and sizing varies from 6" to 48" high. Gemini provides a lifetime warranty on letters and logos and 10-year manufacturer warranty on UL certified electrical components including LEDs and power supplies.

geminimade.com



ADHESIVES

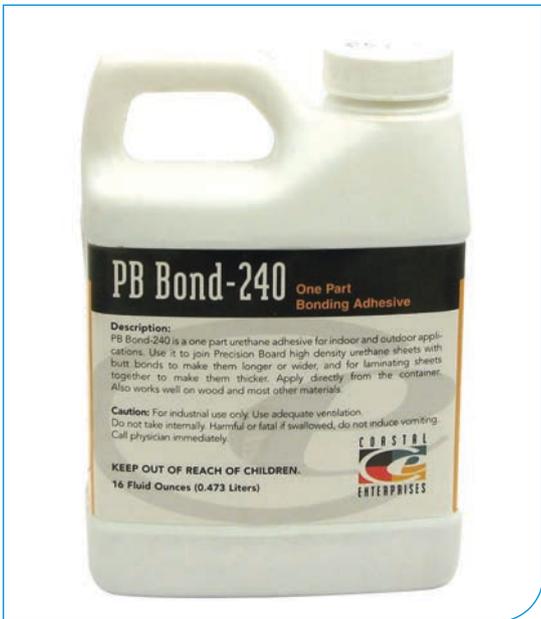
Coastal Enterprises PB Bond 240 HDU Adhesive

PB Bond-240 HDU Adhesive is an amber colored, one part urethane adhesive that works well for indoor or outdoor applications. It cures from a liquid to a solid state with a slight amount of moisture. Use it to join Precision Board High Density Urethane sheets with butt bonds to make them longer or wider, and for laminating sheets together to make them thicker. The consistency of PB Bond-240 HDU Adhesive is similar to honey, making it easy to apply directly from the container. No mixing is required. Cure time: 4 hours before moving, full strength in 12 hours.

Features

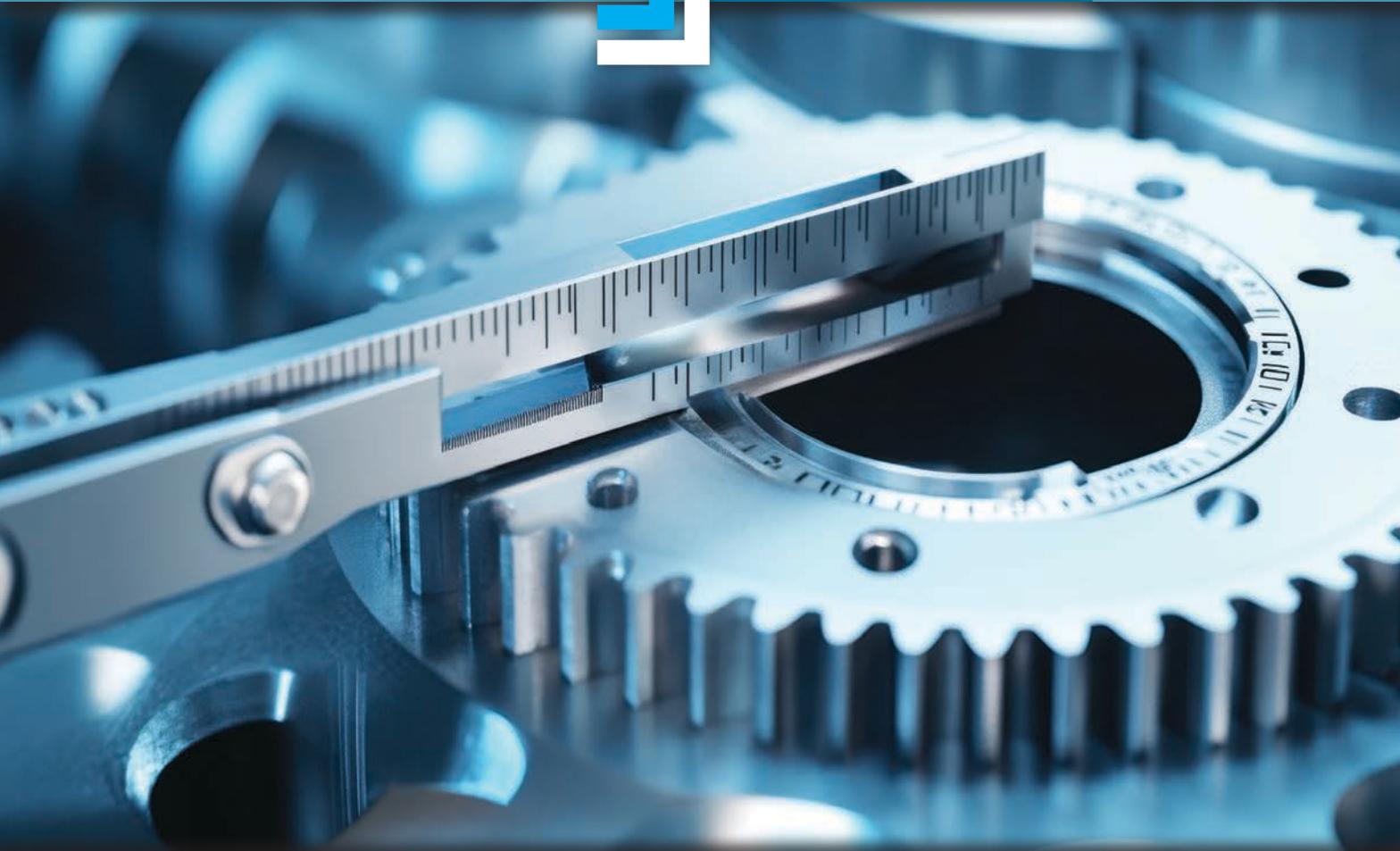
- One step application – no mixing required
- Fully cures in 12 hours
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BRANDING

BY WENDY GRAVES

FORTIFY YOUR
BRAND STORY





Tips and tricks from two books that encourage business owners to strengthen their stories.

Did you make a New Year's Resolution? I did! My resolution is to read more in 2025 and so far I'm off to a great start! I'm here to share some major nuggets from my two most recent reads: "Building A Story Brand" by Donald Miller and "The Go-Giver" by Bob Burg and John David Mann.

Let's dive into "Building a Story Brand" first. As sign enthusiasts, we all share a passion for what we do: supporting our clients, manufacturing signs and completing installations. However, let's be honest: do our clients really care about the same things we care and boast about? Ask yourself this question: what will be your brand's story in 2025 and beyond?

At any of the Make It Happen Signage Academy events, you'll hear us emphasize the phrase "Stand Out" anywhere from five to 10 times during the event. We all sell signs, but does your story help differentiate you from the competition? Does your brand attract customers based on an emotional connection, or is it just a matter of meeting their current sign needs?

From my reading, I've realized that we're all constantly scanning our environment to satisfy our instinctual need for survival. In his book, Miller explains that just because you have a strong brand, that doesn't automatically help your customer's needs get met. As he explained, while he had the largest manufacturing plant in his respective industry, his customers didn't necessarily care. Why? "Because that information doesn't help them meet their basic needs—like eating, drinking, finding love, building a community or seeking deeper meaning." This observation from Miller highlights that as sign shops, we often showcase the wrong information in our marketing.

Storytelling is a powerful tool that business owners can utilize to cut through the noise. It organizes information in a way that compels people to listen. The noise surrounding a sign company often includes mundane details such as product showcases, a new warehouse or recently built projects.

While it's important to our companies,

to a consumer it's just noise. Where's the engagement? Where's the storyline and the connection that meets a primitive need? Take a moment to reflect on your own story. What do you need to filter out from your messaging to make it simply understandable, yet relevant to your current and potential clients? What makes you truly stand out? Grab a piece of paper and just start brain dumping after considering the following questions:

1. What do you offer? (If it's a lot of products, start with your strongest one.)
2. How will it make your customer's life better?
3. What does your customer need to do to buy it?

By answering these questions from your client's perspective, you can adjust your marketing strategies to create a stronger connection. Now, I can already hear the groans—change is never easy and figuring out a new marketing direction can be an overwhelming challenge. It won't be an overnight completion of the to-do list, but it will change the feel and connection people have with your company if done properly.

If you use platforms like MailChimp or Constant Contact, consider sending out an email blast to your customer base with a few thoughtful questions. You could even narrow down the clients and call your top 10 asking for a moment of their time. Start with a couple simple questions like: "What one service does our brand offer you that matters most?" or "What problem does our company solve for you that no one else does?"

You may be surprised by the responses. Will their answers reflect your well-known tagline? Or maybe they'll be influenced by the last product they purchased, or the problem you solved for them. The last thing you want to hear is just a list of products: "You made me an exterior sign, you create banners, you produced that interior sign for my lobby, etc."

While those are all the products you sell, does the client connect emotions to your brand? Are they now invested in your brand or just this one-time experience?

The biggest brands in the world all tell a story. Consider your favorite fitness apparel or technology item. Take Apple for example.

"Storytelling is a powerful tool that business owners can utilize to cut through the noise."





ing - their product, service or idea - than for what they were getting,” says Burg and Mann. “And many of those great fortunes have been squandered by others who had a greater passion for what they were getting than what they were giving.”

I hope you and your sign shop make 2025 a year that sets you apart. I started by reminding you that we all sell signs, and we love them. However, this life is about connecting with people. Your business should be inspiring because you give your time and talents to help the community and build the other businesses in your community.

Knowledge like this is key to aligning yourself for better personal and professional growth. Just try to read a bit with that cup of morning joe or close out your night with some encouraging words, you won't regret it.

In closing, remember this message from

JUST TRY TO READ A BIT WITH THAT CUP OF MORNING JOE OR CLOSE OUT YOUR NIGHT WITH SOME ENCOURAGING WORDS, YOU WON'T REGRET IT.

According to Google, “Apple’s marketing message is to sell experiences and feelings with a goal to enhance creativity and connection that fit into everyday lives.” We may or may not buy their products, but we can all agree that their marketing plan to meet our daily needs is successful.

Onto the next book, “The Go-Giver,”

which also encourages you to consider your brand impact and how your company will stand. This book takes you along a path to better understand some main laws to operate by.

“All the great fortunes in the world have been created by men and women who had a greater passion for what they were giv-

Miller: “No matter what your training, no matter what your skills, no matter what area you’re in: you are the most important commodity. The most valuable gift you have to offer is you. Reaching any goal you set takes 10 percent specific knowledge or technical skills and the other 90 percent is people skills.” ●



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TECHNOLOGY

BY ALEX MARCHESCHI



NEW TECH TAKEOVER

From channel letter benders to digital signage touchscreens, learn about some of the new tech hitting the market.

Every industry is spurred forward by new technology. New thoughts lead to new designs and advancements in tech lead to increased efficiency in the workplace and more effective installations. In the signage industry, the meaning of “new technology” encompasses a lot of things. There are channel letters, wall graphics, digital signage, LED installations, vehicle wraps, carved signage, ADA signs and more that involve their own marketplaces and ecosystems. It can be hard to stay on top of all the product releases and tech advancements.

This new tech roundup shows you the direction the industry is pointing. All signs point to a healthy market for digital signage in the

upcoming decade and the average sign shop customer is becoming increasingly insistent on fully custom signage. There are products in R&D across the country being developed to address these market needs. Continue reading this new tech roundup to keep your finger on the pulse of the industry. Let's start with some of the latest news from Computerized Cutters, the company that produces machines for channel letter production and fabrication.

Channel Letter Production

The signage industry has changed since the pandemic, as Computerized Cutters owner Carl Ondracek explains.



ClearLED's Wall Series allows vibrant, highly customizable digital signage content to shine.

of an inch. These router tables will accurately cut aluminum, acrylic/plastics and wood. The Accu-Cut XLR8 is also capable of cutting 3D parts, when used with the proper software to create 3D files.

“We set out to manufacture the best router right here in the USA, to stand out against the influx of lower-priced machines from Asia. While these imported routers might be cheap, they often fall short in quality and post-purchase support,” says Ondracek. “We joke with companies looking at the cheap Asian machines, we tell them to buy three of them so that when the first two break down in the first year they will have spare parts available. We want companies to know that when they buy one of our router tables, it’s going to last for over 20 years.”

In terms of what makes the company move these days, their classic offering is still a popular option for the market.

“Our top-selling machines are the Accu-Bend series. The Accu-Bend Freedom, in particular, is our best seller because it empowers smaller sign companies to compete with larger ones,” says Ondracek. “Priced around \$20,000, it offers a cost-effective alternative compared to machines costing \$50,000 and more.”

Ondracek has been running the company since the mid-90s and, as a result, he has quite the understanding of the signage market.

“With the number of new sign companies coming on the scene, and the growth of existing ones, finding good skilled workers has become increasingly challenging,” he says. “As a result, the demand for automation is higher than ever.”

Here at SBI, we’ve of course been noticing the demand for custom signage skyrocket across the nation as capabilities and branding

expectations continue to expand. There seems to have been a death of uniformity across the market.

“From car wraps to interior and exterior signs, nothing is cookie-cutter anymore. Companies especially want their signs to stand out,” says Ondracek. “With handmade signs becoming rare, machines have become essential for sign-making today.”

LED Technology

After a trip to Digital Sign Experience 2024 (DSE) in Las Vegas this past December, SBI walked away with a newfound understanding of the digital signage market. The market includes a vast array of products from LED boards to content management systems to experiential design equipment and more. One company, ClearLED, stopped many attendees in their tracks with their Wall Series of LED display modules that can be combined and arranged to turn a storefront window into an eye-catching digital signage display, or even formed into a cube to create a one-of-a-kind experiential signage installation at a trade show, retail store, concert, etc.

The ClearLED Wall Series was designed for high-profile installations and is comprised of a lightweight modular system with built-in power supplies and receiving cards for easy installation and impressive brightness, ensuring a streamlined display experience.

ClearLED ensures a high pixel density and more captivating imagery on their transparent display. Customers can select from a range spanning 1.9mm to 25mm for tailored solutions and with a vast 120-degree viewing angle, in both vertical and horizontal dimensions, it unlocks limitless creative possibilities. In terms

“The COVID-19 recession in 2020 was particularly challenging for machine manufacturers. During such downturns, companies are reluctant to invest in capital expenditures,” says Ondracek. “However, as we’ve seen in past recessions, recovery eventually comes and businesses recognize the need to invest in new machines to stay competitive.”

The Accu-Cut XLR8 CNC Router Table is Computerized Cutters latest product to hit the market. These router tables are built upon a heavy-duty steel welded base that will not vibrate loose and are hand-assembled by American craftsmen to ensure accuracy and repeatable cutting up to .003 (three-thousandths)



The Accu-Cut XLR8 CNC Router Table is a heavy-duty, steel-welded workhorse.

Photo Credit: Computerized Cutters



ClearLED can transform any set of windows into a digital signage masterpiece.

of brightness, the ClearLED wall shines brightly in daylight and illuminates the night, ensuring content is vividly presented, no matter the time or place.

According to ClearLED, LED displays are capable of revolutionizing retail spaces in eight particular ways:

1. Visual Impact: LED displays provide unmatched visual impact. Their vibrant colors, sharp images, and flexible sizing make them ideal for creating eye-catching visuals that draw customers in. Whether it's a massive video wall or a sleek digital sign, LED displays grab attention.

2. Storytelling: In the digital age, storytelling is paramount. LED displays enable retailers to tell their brand story in immersive ways. They can convey the brand's history, values, and mission through dynamic video content, fostering a deeper connection with customers.

3. Interactivity: Many LED displays are touch-sensitive or equipped with motion sensors. This interactivity engages customers on a whole new level. Shoppers can explore product catalogs, try out virtual try-on experiences, or access additional product information right at the display.

4. Personalization: LED displays offer opportunities for personalization. Retailers can tailor content based on customer profiles, purchase history, or even the weather outside. Personalized experiences make customers feel valued and understood.

5. Wayfinding: Navigating large retail spaces can be daunting. LED displays can serve as interactive wayfinding tools, guiding cus-

tomers to the products or sections they're looking for. This enhances the shopping experience and reduces frustration.

6. Real-time Updates: LED displays excel at displaying real-time information. Whether it's daily specials, flash sales, or inventory updates, retailers can keep customers informed and engaged. This agility in content management keeps the shopping experience fresh.

7. Aesthetic Enhancements: LED displays contribute to the aesthetics of retail spaces. They can be seamlessly integrated into store designs, adding a futuristic, modern touch that elevates the overall ambiance.

8. Sustainability: Sustainability is a growing concern for retailers. LED displays are energy-efficient, consuming significantly less power than traditional lighting systems. This not only reduces operational costs but also aligns with green initiatives.

Digital Signage Touchscreens

SBI was also introduced to TSI Touch at DSE 2024, the Uniontown, Penn.-based company is a leading manufacturer of touchscreen and protective solutions for commercial-grade displays. Beyond being able to offer touch capabilities for any display, they provide multiple interactive solutions for even the most unique projects.

TSI Touch is an employee-owned business that was established in 1989 as a division within a defense contracts company and re-established as an independent company in 2011.

West Virginia University has been in the midst of campus expansion in recent years, and the constant expansion led to a need for a

simple, easy solution for information to be displayed on the many Donor Walls and Hall of Fame installations across their campus. WVU began to explore the use of digital signage to meet these needs and provide informational capabilities throughout the installations across their campus.

Working with the InfoStation team at WVU, TSI Touch designed a custom solution to meet the demands of WVU. The products manufactured were ShadowSense and Projective Capacitive (PCAP) touch overlays built specifically to fit the Samsung DM, PM and QM series displays being utilized on the WVU campus. The TSI Touch overlays included customized extended cold rolled steel bezels with highly protective tempered glass. The solution provided an innovative, user-friendly touch experience and protection for the commercial grade Samsung displays.

ShadowSense touch technology was first chosen because it is not susceptible to ambient light sources compared to Infrared touch technology. As PCAP was introduced to WVU, they began to make more purchases with this touch technology because the solution has an aesthetically pleasing zero-bezel appearance and is also immune to ambient light sources.

With the customized extended bezel of the TSI Touch overlays (with ShadowSense), WVU was able to cover all other hardware behind the displays to create a clean, finished look. The operating system, mounting hardware, etc. were enclosed within the final product and hidden from users with side bezels that extended from the front of the solution to ¼" from the



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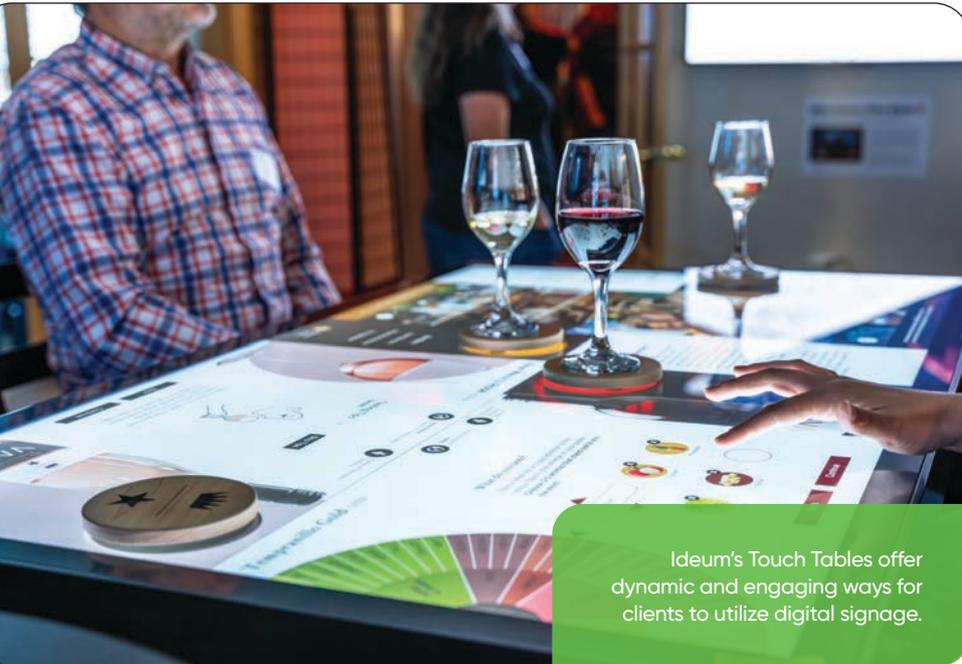


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Ideum's Touch Tables offer dynamic and engaging ways for clients to utilize digital signage.

wall. The digital content management solution WVU utilizes is Four Winds Interactive (FWI), one of TSI Touch's industry partners. Through leveraging FWI's content manager and player software, WVU is now able to create custom content that supports the visual communications plan of the university.

TSI's products are now installed in 13 buildings on the Morgantown, W. Va.- campus, with 17 installs utilizing fully interactive content.

Digital Signage Touchscreen Tables

The New Mexico Wine & Grape Growers Association and Ideum teamed up to celebrate the rich history and pioneering spirit of New Mexico's winegrowers using Ideum's Tasting Table at the 2025 Unified Wine and Grape Symposium at the end of January.

Ideum's Tasting Table can host up to four guests at once. The bar-height touch table features an optically bonded 55" touch display and a stylish combination of wood and steel, making it an ideal addition to wine bars and tasting rooms.

The Wine Experience software package allows owners to upload wine information to a cloud-based content management system (CMS) and design personalized tasting experiences. Ideum's sophisticated object-recognition software aids in identifying specific wines using custom tabletop coasters. Guests can also share their tasting experiences through an interactive digital tasting wheel.

New Mexico is the oldest wine-growing re-

gion in the United States, with the introduction of the Mission grape in 1629 by Spanish friars. To celebrate the state's long wine history, the New Mexico Wine & Grape Growers Association and Ideum collaborated to showcase how the industry continues to evolve, blending tradition with cutting-edge technology.

Ideum worked with the New Mexico Wine Association and VARA Winery to develop and extensively test the Wine Experience software. The Software allows wineries, wine bars and others to create their own branded tasting experience through a cloud-based CMS.

"We're thrilled to partner with Ideum to bring a new level of interactive engagement to the Unified Wine and Grape Symposium," said Christopher Goblet, Executive Director of the New Mexico Wine and Grape Growers Association. "Our state's winemaking tradition has deep roots, and it's exciting to showcase both our historic legacy and the innovative strides we're making in the industry today."

Owners can create custom wine tastings, and as guests participate, their choices on the tasting wheel are recorded and sent to the cloud. This helps winemakers and others gather information about the aromas and flavors in their wines. It makes the tasting experience more straightforward to understand, more interactive and less intimidating for guests. A winemaker or sommelier can guide the experience, or guests can explore at their own pace.

"This is a passion project that brings together all of our experience," says Jim Spadac-

ini, founder of Ideum and amateur vigneron. "We've been developing touch tables since 2006, and we've been developing object recognition software, which identifies the wines, for nearly a decade. In addition, we've created tasting software for Starbucks, the JCB Collection and MSC Cruises. This new product brings all of this together."

Printers

Roland DGA Corporation recently introduced its fastest TrueVIS printer to date: the next-generation XP-640 – a Pro-level 64-inch eco-solvent inkjet that combines high image quality and outstanding productivity. The XP-640 incorporates several exciting innovations, including new printheads, upgraded high-speed data control technology and new inks, to provide users with the best of both worlds – outstanding speed and stunning output.

The XP-640's newly designed dual staggered printheads eject finer ink droplets at higher densities to produce incredibly vibrant, detailed graphics with fewer passes. These advanced printheads, along with the new data control functionality, enable the XP-640 to print at speeds of up to 818 square feet per hour while achieving high-definition image quality.

New TH eco-solvent inks deliver an expanded gamut that opens up a new world of creative opportunities for print professionals. In addition to CMYK, Orange and Green, the TH ink set includes a new Red ink option, allowing users to achieve the highest accuracy with red and



TSI Touch turned WVU's campus into an interactive learning center.

Photo Credit: Ideum, TSI Touch

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Roland DGA's TrueVIS XP-640 High-Speed Eco-Solvent Printer's dual staggered printheads eject finer ink droplets at higher densities.



orange expression.

The XP-640 is packed with features for efficient high-quality output, including an easy-to-use seven-inch color LCD touch panel, a media setup function that automatically performs accurate media gap and compensation adjustments, a media take-up that reduces media skewing for stable production and a perforated sheet cutter for quick and efficient post-processing work.

Like all Roland DG devices, the XP-640 is built to provide high levels of performance over the long haul, with minimal maintenance required. XP-640 users also have access to Roland DG Connect.

Digital Signage Content Management

Kitcast, a leader in digital signage software for Apple TV, announced the release of its new platform. It enables businesses to turn their digital displays into dynamic, engaging and interactive communication tools.

As digital signage becomes a critical component of modern corporate communication, the demand for more efficient and goal-oriented tools has never been higher. With Apple TV's widespread adoption and Kitcast's smart management features, businesses now have a scalable solution that meets the needs of both small companies and large enterprises.

Kitcast simplifies content management across multiple screens, allowing users to display images, videos, data dashboards, webpages and live streams effortlessly. Kitcast's platform is used by global giants like Disney Studios, American Eagle Outfitters, The New York Times and Delta Dental.

Kitcast delivers enterprise-grade reliability with features such as zero-touch deployment, Single Sign-On (SSO) and advanced user management.

Key Features of Kitcast:

- **Enterprise-Ready Features:** Kitcast offers enterprise-level functionality, including zero-touch mass deployment, Single Sign-On (SSO) and advanced user management, ensuring reliability at any scale.
- **API:** Kitcast API allows customers to create custom integrations with third party applications, offering enhanced flexibility and control.
- **Drag and Drop Built-in Widgets:** Effortlessly integrate various content sources into playlists, including social media feeds, calendars, weather, TikTok, TED

Talks or HTML5 websites.

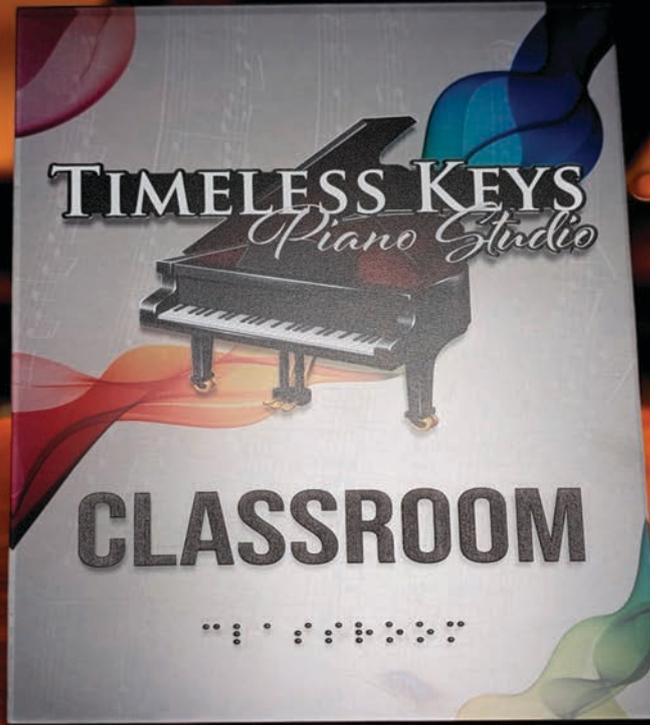
- **AI-Powered Content Creation:** Create stunning designs in seconds. Select a video or static background, add your message and let the AI craft the perfect layout.
- **Unlimited Media Library:** Enjoy flexible media management with unlimited cloud storage. Easily connect to Dropbox or Google Drive for seamless media access.
- **Easy Playlist Management:** Switch between and create new playlists effortlessly with side navigation that makes content control simple.
- **Flexible Scheduling:** Schedule and modify content from anywhere using smart playlists. Loop content weekly or choose specific dates for tailored delivery with automated expiration.

"We've built a powerful platform packed with practical features that make managing—whether it's a few or thousands—easier and more efficient," says Egor Belenkov, CEO of Kitcast. "In a fast-changing industry, staying ahead is critical. This release highlights our commitment to delivering innovative, scalable solutions that drive growth and improve communication." ●



Photo Credit: Roland DGA, Kitcast

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Product FAQs



acrylite.co/3Dprinting

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LED

BY ALEX MARCHESCHI



CHECK THE SCOREBOARDS

A roundup of digital signage scoreboard installations.

Digital signage and digital scoreboards play a vital role in keeping attendees of sporting events, concerts and speaking sessions engaged and active. These days, the possibilities seem endless as LED screens wow attendees of events in arenas and stadiums across the world. Major players in the space like Daktronics, SNA Displays, ThinkSIGN, Watchfire and more are constantly developing and installing LED-based technology that is changing the game.

The installations of these boards often involve numerous partners and technology consultants as it's never as simple as it may seem to bring crystal clear technology to massive venues.

Detroit Tigers Unleash Second-Largest Video Display in Baseball from Daktronics

Revamping and replacing a previous installation in Detroit, Michigan, Daktronics of Brookings, South Dakota, partnered with the Detroit Tigers to deliver the second-largest main video display in baseball's major leagues at Comerica Park. Five additional displays were installed along the fascia, dugout and line score locations ahead of the 2024 baseball season.

Outfield Video Display

The second-largest display in baseball in the United States replaced the outfield display

at Comerica Park and features more than 15,000 square feet of digital canvas featuring 14.1 million pixels. The display itself measures approximately 67 feet high by 185 feet wide with a lower component measuring nearly 35 feet high by 96 feet high to create a single outfield display. It features 10-millimeter pixel spacing to provide Tiger fans with clear imagery

“Our company takes great pride in providing professional sports customers with the latest technology and overall digital real estate to execute their complex and engaging game-day experiences,” said Daktronics CEO Reece Kurtenbach.

Photo Credit: Daktronics



WARD

Photo Credit: SNA Displays

Additional Displays

Two ribbon displays were replaced at the ballpark, one along the first baseline and the other along the third baseline. Each of these measure roughly 3.5 feet high by 75 feet wide. They provide the opportunity to share supplemental graphics to the main display as well as high-lighting sponsors throughout events.

Similarly, long narrow displays were installed along the front edge of each dugout roof. These two displays each measure more than 0.5 feet high by 92.5 feet wide. In the outfield below the main display, a new display measures almost 5 feet high by 96 feet wide that keeps fans informed with instantly delivered pitching data as

signshop.com



SNA Displays installed LED boards at University of Central Oklahoma, one of the premier D2 NCAA football schools.

well as branding and fan entertainment graphics throughout each game.

These displays can show any combination of live video, instant replays, up-to-the-minute statistics and game information, graphics and animations and sponsorship messages.

UCO Stadium Upgrades Digital Signage

The University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), a public university just north of Oklahoma City, upgraded the large format digital signage at Chad Richison Stadium using LED video technology from SNA Displays in February 2024. The stadium is home to the UCO Bronchos' NCAA Division II football team and seats 12,000 spectators.

Owner's representative and technology consultant Anthony James Partners (AJP) provided comprehensive design, procurement, and construction administration services, supporting UCO in selecting SNA Displays to manufacture and install the new EMPIRE Exterior LED video display technology.

"UCO went above and beyond with their knowledge of the facility to overcome some infrastructure challenges that contributed to a successful outcome. Overall their staff was an incredible resource for us to get this upgrade project completed," said Royce Wall, AJP's Vice President, Construction Services.

"The newly installed end-zone LED ribbon boards are a great addition to the stadium for scoring and stats, allowing for full video on the primary display, all of which will

boost fan experience."

SNA Displays retrofitted the stadium's main video scoreboard with a much larger display, representing an increase of almost 300 percent in overall resolution.

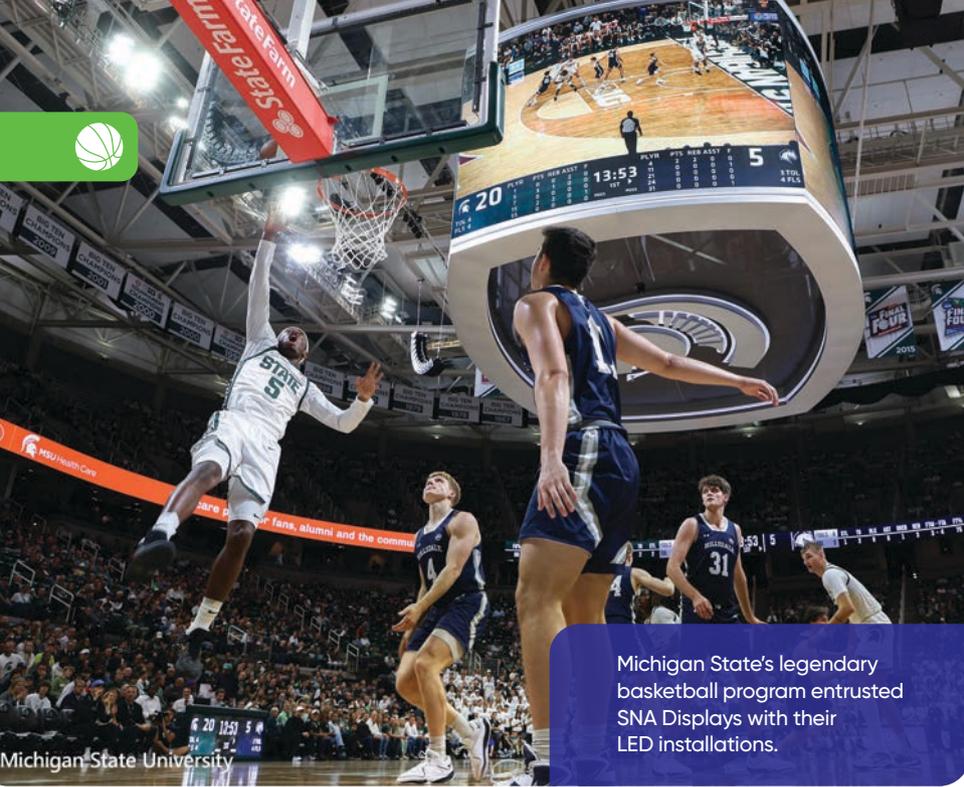
The new 10 mm LED display is 35-foot-high-by-42-foot-wide (1,056-by-1,280 pixels) and processes 1.3 million pixels. The scoreboard also features an illuminated UCO logo on the front of the display and Bronchos channel lettering on the rear side. Set at the south end of the stadium above a rocky waterfall, the aesthetics give Richison Stadium one of the most interesting looks in college football.

SNA Displays also provided two end-zone LED ribbons that line the entryway to the university's Sports Performance Center on the north end of the field. Both ribbon boards are approximately ninety feet long.

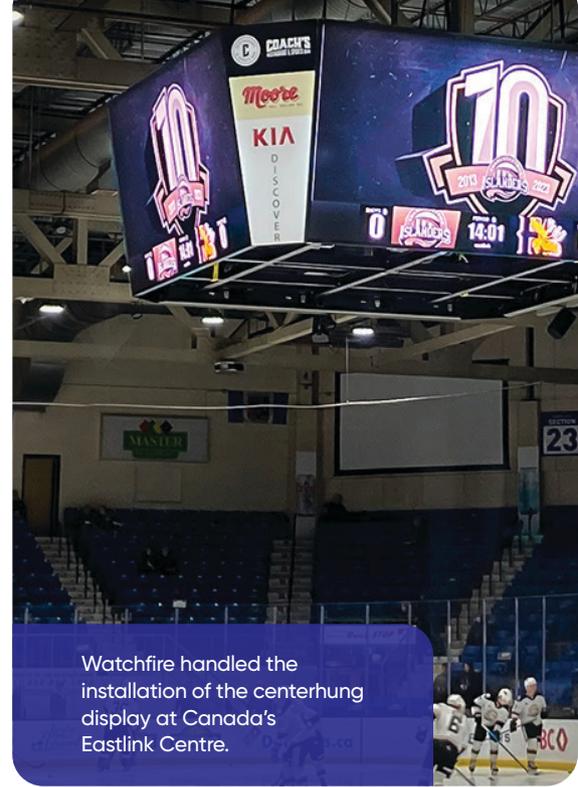
Canada's Eastlink Centre's Digital Centerhung from Watchfire

In the spring of 2023, the four-sided centerhung display replaced an aging fixed-digit scoreboard. It provides fans in the 3,645-seat arena a 360-degree view of scores, live game and replay videos, crowd engagement videos, animations and advertisements.

Watchfire was selected by the Eastlink Centre, a combined hockey/basketball arena, trade and convention facility located in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada, to provide the island's first centerhung digital scoreboard.



Michigan State's legendary basketball program entrusted SNA Displays with their LED installations.



Watchfire handled the installation of the centerhung display at Canada's Eastlink Centre.

Built in 1991 for the Canada Winter Games, Eastlink Centre is home to the Charlottetown Islanders of the QMJHL and the Charlottetown Power of the ECBL and hosts concerts and other events throughout the year.

The Gemini Group of Companies of Charlottetown submitted the winning bid to design and install the scoreboard and specified Watchfire to manufacture the display. The centerhung measures 8.5' x 13.5' on each side and has a pitch of 3.9mm.

"The resolution on the scoreboard is so good, it's like watching a huge television," said John Abbott, interim general manager of Eastlink Centre. "It's a blank canvas and we're excited about the possibilities."

Fans in the arena are thrilled with the new addition and love to see themselves on the centerhung, according to Abbott.

"We're still learning all the things we can do with the display, and Watchfire reps have been on-site several times to teach us all the capabilities. This display really helps us punch above our weight at Eastlink Centre."

Maintenance and repair of the centerhung is also now easier. Watchfire mounted the new scoreboard using a hoist system, so venue operators can easily lower and raise the display for routine maintenance or repair.

"The new scoreboard is the crown jewel," said Abbott.

"Eastlink Centre is an important part of the P.E.I. community, and Watchfire is glad to be a part of the upgrades made at the facility," said Bob Ferrulo, Watchfire Sports Market Director. "The centerhung adds great excitement to

the venue and we look forward to partnering with Eastlink Centre for many years."

Michigan State Upgrades Video Technology at Breslin Center

In January of 2024, Michigan State University upgraded the in-bowl LED displays at the Jack Breslin Student Events Center with video technology from SNA Displays. The Breslin Center is home to the MSU men's and women's basketball teams as well as the Spartans' volleyball program. The multipurpose arena has more than 16,000 seats and hosts a variety of events including commencement ceremonies, concerts, comedians, professional wrestling and other live entertainment.

Owner's representative and technology consultant, Anthony James Partners (AJP), provided comprehensive design, procurement and construction administration services, supporting MSU in the selection of SNA Displays to manufacture and install the new digital display network.

The Breslin Center's focal point, a giant centerhung video display system, was completely replaced with a new structure, hoist system and video technology by SNA Displays.

The centerhung features four slightly curved 4 mm BOLD Interior LED screens joined together with tight seams to create a seamless digital canvas with 360-degree viewing. Unwrapped, the centerhung's display dimensions would be 14 feet tall and 104 feet long (1,080-by-7,920 pixels). The display system processes more than 8.5 million pixels.

Additional features of the centerhung include cladding and LED strip lighting by Phoenix Signs as well as a massive backlit Spartans logo facing down toward the court.

SNA Displays also provided a 360-degree LED ribbon board in the arena. At approximately four feet tall, the new 10 mm ribbon display extends all the way around the Breslin Center's bowl, more than 725 linear feet (112-by-22,208 pixels).

"It's a really good-looking centerhung that complements the building and its history, and SNA made the custom scoreboard design come to life," said Michael Rowe, AJP's chief executive officer. "We have enjoyed a great relationship with Michigan State Athletics spanning well over a decade. SNA Displays did a great job looking after one of our most valued customers."

"We're honored to work with such a class act Big Ten program like Michigan State athletics as well as the Anthony James Partner's team to provide our technology in one of the highest-profile venues in collegiate sports," said Jason Helton, executive vice president for SNA Displays.

The new display system employs a multi-faceted video management tool, Ross Video's XPression Tessera, along with a hardware platform including a Carbonite Ultra power switcher and an Ultrix router.

Phoenix Signs provided structural and cladding fabrication services, including lighting elements and the centerhung's large Spartans logo feature. Bumgarner Construction provided extensive installation services. ●

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ISA MATTERS

BY DAVID HICKEY



Looking Out For You

ISA works with city planners to make things right.

Imagine this: your company has just designed a creative sign, one that is perfect to drive business to your customer's facility. But city codes won't allow the sign to be installed.

It's an all-too-common occurrence, particularly in cities where sign codes are overly restrictive. And it impacts sign companies of all sizes, specialties and regions.

Because of the high cost to our industry, ISA launched programs to reach city planners, so that they could better understand signs, sign regulations and the economic benefit to their community. That was in 2011 and since, ISA has had personal connections with more than 10,300 planners and local officials.

Some of these connections have come through ISA's Planning for Sign Code Success™ events, where we bring sign and sign code experts to train planners. ISA also has had success connecting at the

annual American Planning Association's National Planning Conference (NPC), where thousands of city planners meet to learn the latest trends and network with their peers.

ISA and the sign industry have had a solid run of having our education offerings selected. In 2014 and from 2016-2019, ISA talked to more than 1,100 attendees about wayfinding, content-neutral sign codes, creative sign design, historic signs and other issues of importance to both planners and our industry.

The pandemic nixed two approved sessions in 2020, setting off a string of conferences lacking sign content.

We're back on track for 2025 APA in late March with two presentations. The first, Signs of Diversity, shows how signs can be a powerful tool in ensuring that all voices are seen and heard. The second explores success stories of how downtowns and Business Improvement Districts have used digital signs to support

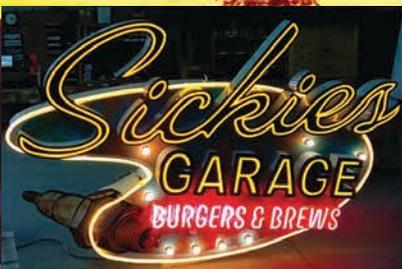
local arts communities.

For many years now, ISA has shared sign industry information on the NPC exhibit hall. Unlike others, we aren't selling anything but are giving. That may be information about sign codes or handouts from the Sign Research Foundation. Once back at home, ISA's advocacy team follows up as a trusted contact. This leads to planners reaching out when they are developing sign codes, or they have a question about our industry. It builds a beneficial relationship that helps our industry grow.

Of course, ISA's advocacy team is here to help you as well. During ISA International Sign Expo 2025, our team will be at The Hub answering your sign code questions. Feel free to stop by and we'll also tell you about the presentations at NPC.

ISA International Sign Expo 2025 is April 23-25, with a pre-conference day on April 22. Register at www.signexpo.org.

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LEADERSHIP

BY JOE ARENELLA



Becoming A Leader

Heavy is the head that wears the crown, but it doesn't have to lead to headaches and neck cramps!

Stepping into a leadership role at your sign shop—whether as a team lead, manager or business owner—comes with its own set of challenges. The transition from employee to leader can be stressful, requiring a shift in mindset and responsibility. However, embracing this challenge puts you in a position to make a real impact—not only on the success of your business but also on the lives of your employees and your community.

Leadership is more than just giving orders; it's about guiding a team, setting clear expectations and fostering a positive work environment while maintaining accountability.

It can feel lonely at the top!

One of the biggest challenges I faced early on as a business owner was wanting employees to like me. I struggled with balancing leadership and friendship, and it took time—along with some hard lessons and hurt feelings—to realize an important truth. While you can be friendly with your team and even enjoy social events outside of work, strong boundaries are essential. Leadership isn't about being liked; it's about earning respect by making the tough decisions that keep the shop running effectively. Learning to separate personal relationships from professional responsibilities can sometimes make leadership feel lonely, but it is one

of the most valuable lessons any leader can master.

No One Gets It!

Owning your own shop comes with added pressures for you that your employees—and sometimes even your family—can't fully appreciate. The responsibility can feel overwhelming, like you're carrying everything on your shoulders. I remember a time when one of our designers, who did art projects as a hobby, gave me a small handcrafted frame with a mini-Atlas inside—the Titan god who carried the heavens. I looked at it and thought, yeah, that's exactly what this feels like sometimes.

EVEN AFTER PUTTING IN THE EFFORT AND EARNING THEIR POSITION, SOME SHOP OWNERS MAY FEEL LIKE THEY DON'T TRULY DESERVE IT. THIS SELF-DOUBT CAN OFTEN LEAD TO MISSED OPPORTUNITIES DUE TO FEAR OF FAILURE.

But here's the thing—you don't have to carry it all alone. As you step into your role as a leader, finding the right support systems can make all the difference. Reach out to your local sign association, look for a mentor, or join a mastermind group. The challenges you're facing aren't new; they only feel that way if you try to manage them on your own. Surround yourself with like-minded business owners or leaders who understand what you're going through, and you'll realize that you're not in this alone.

I'm Just a Sign Guy/Gal!

Let's talk about Imposter Syndrome—that nagging feeling that you're not as competent or qualified as others believe, despite clear evidence of your skills, experience and success. People struggling with imposter syndrome often doubt themselves, fear being exposed as a “fraud” and attribute their accomplishments to luck

rather than their own hard work.

This feeling is especially common among new business owners and leaders stepping into bigger roles. Even after putting in the effort and earning their position or creating a successful sign shop, they may still feel like they don't truly deserve it or that they're just “winging it.” This self-doubt can often lead to hesitation, stress, and missed opportunities due to fear of failure.

I still struggle with this sometimes in my own career. Back in college, I built a janitorial contracting business that grew to over 100 employees, yet when someone asked what I did for a living, my response was always, “I'm just a janitor.” Years later, after growing my sign business to over 60 employees and generating more than \$10 million in annual sales, I still found myself saying, “I'm just a sign guy.” No matter how much success I had, I couldn't shake the feeling that I wasn't really a business

leader—just someone doing a job.

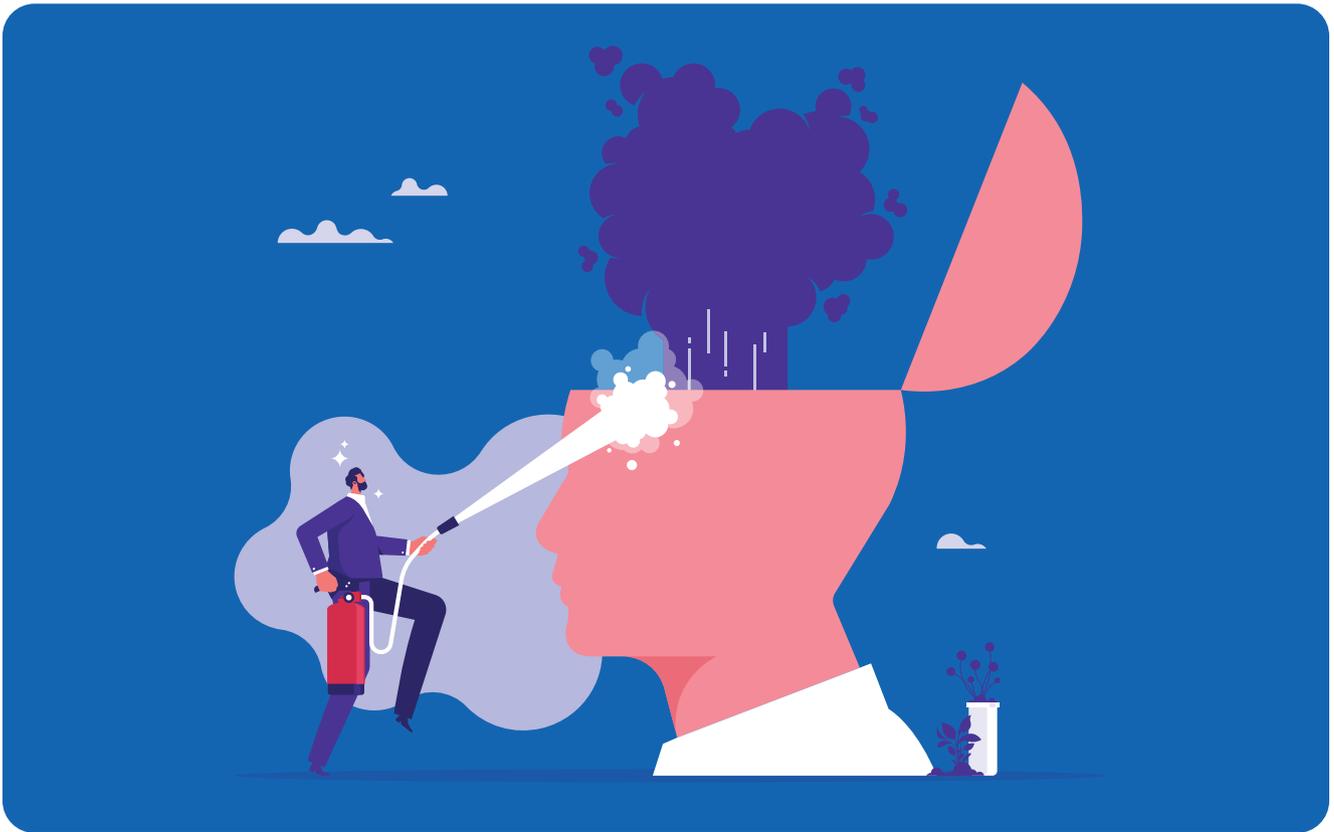
In a recent podcast interview with Lori Anderson, (CEO of International Sign Association) my daughter Liz (who co-hosts the Behind the Signs podcast with me) and I had a great conversation about this problem in the sign industry. From business owners to lead installers, and everyone in between, people in leadership roles often downplay their own expertise, referring to themselves as “just a ___ guy/gal.” But the reality is, if you're leading a sign shop, you're managing a highly skilled workforce, handling complex workflows and overseeing detailed budgets to ensure profitability. You are not just anything—you are an industry expert and a business warrior.

So, moving forward, stop selling yourself short. Whether you're a business owner, a department head, or a team lead, own your role. You are not a “just a ___”—you are a leader.



LEADERSHIP

BY JOE ARENELLA



I Feel Like I'm Dying Here!

As you step into leadership, my biggest piece of advice is this: pay close attention to burnout. It's real, and it can take a serious toll on your health, your family and your business. I learned this the hard way. For years, I never clocked out. I answered client calls and emails on every vacation, worked six days a week and put in 10–12 hour days. I'm not saying there won't be "hustle days" when you need to push through a big proposal or get a job out the door, but if those days turn into weeks, months or even years, you're heading down a dangerous path.

Running your business this way is not successful. On paper, you might be seen as the person who always gets the job done, or you may feel like you're making great money. But in reality, everything suffers. For me, the stress led to excessive drinking. Sitting at my desk until 9 p.m. night after night, downing a bottle of wine or six beers, became my way to "wind down" from a day that never truly ended. That stress affected my health, my relationships and my decision-making for the business.

Eventually, I had to make serious changes. I got completely sober, ran 20 marathons in the past 10 years, started meditating and most importantly, learned to unplug. I make time for my family without thinking about work (and without feeling guilty about it). I even discovered a handy little tool called the "Vacation Responder" on my email—something I once thought I'd never use. These

changes weren't easy after a lifetime of being a workaholic, but they were necessary for me to become a better leader.

I don't share this to discourage you from stepping up in leadership. In fact, it's the opposite. Your legacy as a leader depends on your ability to take care of yourself. If you prioritize your well-being, you'll be in a much better position to support your

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LEADERSHIP

BY JOE ARENELLA

family, employees and customers. Leadership isn't about being perfect; it's about being willing to grow. If you take care of yourself, you'll be able to make a real and lasting impact on the people around you, and ensure your sign shop's success. ●

Joe Arenella: Founder of Sign Tech International, a sign shop with 60 employees that made signs for national chains, local developers, and big projects like the Dallas Cowboy Stadium. He turned from sign shop owner to software founder! With SignTracker (an Inktavo company), he makes job tracking and sign quoting easy for sign shop owners.

Elizabeth Arenella Toynes (Liz): Grew up in the sign industry as Joe's daughter. After swearing off the industry and earning her degree in accounting, she got wrangled back in. She now co-owns and operates Studio Dzo, a multidisciplinary design studio that specializes in designing and building beautiful,

inclusive, and effective signage and way-finding that elevate brands and experiences, with her husband Russell in Austin, Texas.

You can also find Joe and Liz on the **Behind the Signs Facebook Community** for industry tips and free resources, and on the **Behind the Signs Podcast** where they discuss the ins and outs of owning a sign business.

The Behind the Signs podcast offers valuable conversations with sign industry professionals that share ideas, growth tips, trade hacks and more with the goal of elevating our industry together.

Watch on YouTube to hear gems of advice from industry titans like ISA's President/CEO Lori Anderson, Vital Sign Co. owner Mike Stephens, Cooper Sign Co. CEO Jennifer Cooper, Wilcox Metal Fabricators owner Peter Wilcox and more. Joe and Elizabeth offer a rare perspective that combines time-tested sign business advice and cutting-edge design and business ideas from the father-daughter duo.



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OPERATIONS

BY A.J. TITUS



How To Create Efficiencies in Business

Follow these tips to tighten up your shop.

Productivity is something we're hyper-focused on at Signarama. We set aggressive goals each year, and while some of them might be a stretch, we make every effort to achieve them.

The need for efficiency lies in the most vital aspects of an organization, and it's critical to identify and eliminate inefficiencies throughout the year to meet these goals. It goes back to ensuring that you have processes in place to track what

needs to be accomplished and prioritizing those tasks that have maximum value for your business.

If you're seeing success in what you're doing, then, outside of seeking efficiencies and ways to enhance that process, there's no reason to change things up. However, when you see inefficiencies or areas that need improvement, it would be irresponsible not to implement the necessary changes.

It's About the Culture

Outside of having systems in place to track efficiency, the number one way to identify inefficiency is communication. There needs to be departmental and cross-departmental communication to ensure everyone is on the same page, and everyone needs to be honest with each other.

The added layer to this is that you need a team and culture in place that emphasizes teamwork, personal growth and accountability. When that culture



OPERATIONS



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Systems That Work

To minimize this dilemma of busyness vs. productivity, you should put systems in place to prioritize your days and track current and upcoming projects.

There are individuals who are very good at prioritizing tasks and taking the

to block out those hours. This allows them to see what they've prioritized that week, identify what they've accomplished and hone in on the areas they need to focus in on the following week.

We also utilize a program that allows our teams to collaborate cross-depart-

ONE OF THE TRAPS WE TEND TO FALL INTO IS THE THOUGHT THAT BEING BUSY LEADS TO BEING PRODUCTIVE, AND THAT'S NOT ALWAYS THE CASE.

right steps to accomplish those tasks to reach the result efficiently. There are others who aren't as good at prioritizing, and that's where the right processes come into play.

One thing I encourage our team to do is fill their calendars every day. That doesn't mean filling your day with meetings when they aren't necessary. Instead, when our team is working, I want them

mentally to track deadlines and responsibilities. When everyone is on the same page about what needs to be done and when, it provides accountability, promotes teamwork, and for us, it's improved our efficiency while minimizing the trap of being busy without being productive.

Setting Expectations

It is important for all team members to

is in place, team members are comfortable with having typically uncomfortable conversations around inefficiency, identifying the problem and implementing the necessary solutions to maximize productivity.

One of the traps we tend to fall into is the thought that being busy leads to being productive, and that's not always the case. Just because you're working on a lot doesn't mean you're accomplishing a lot, and this is a misconception we're seeing across many industries.

At Signarama headquarters, if we allow our own busyness to get in the way of supporting our franchisees, we are directly impacting their bottom line.





OPERATIONS

BY A.J. TITUS



Weekly meetings keep you on track, but it's important not to "meet just to meet." There has to be goals in place!

take ownership and accountability for their work.

If inefficiencies are identified with a team member or a department, there should be an understanding that it's their responsibility to implement an effective solution to correct the problem.

Part of my responsibility is ensuring my team knows when there are things that need to be corrected. When those conversations happen, we identify the problem and its causes and then pinpoint a solution to eliminate the issue. From there, it's their responsibility to implement that solution.

When changes are implemented, you must expect a certain level of resistance. Not everyone is going to be on the same page from day one. But, as those changes are successful, you'll see buy-in from the team and im-

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BY A.J. TITUS

provement in efficiency across the board.

People, in general, are hesitant to accept change. But like Henry Ford said: “If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.”

Three Tips for Greater Efficiency

1. PRIORITIZE YOUR TASKS.

It can be easy to look at your to-do list and start with the easiest tasks. My advice is to identify the most important things you need to accomplish that day and start there. This way, you’re focusing on what needs to be done and minimizing the pitfalls of being busy over being productive.

2. HOLD WEEKLY ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS.

Accountability is an important aspect of efficiency. I meet with my direct reports each week, and our team meets with their direct report weekly as well. This one-on-

one time allows for conversations around what was accomplished in the previous week and the priorities for this week.

If we’re behind in certain areas, these meetings provide an opportunity to identify those areas of inefficiency and course correct with the right solution so that we can continue to prioritize production.

3. PRACTICE EVERY DAY.

Consistency is one of the biggest keys to efficiency. To be consistent, you must practice every single day. You can’t approach your day or your tasks half-heartedly. You have to plan and prioritize so that you can produce at the highest level.

If it takes 10,000 hours to become a master at efficiency, that’s 10,000 hours of practice that you must work at every day.

BONUS TIP: Speaking of 10,000 hours, and inspired by Wendy Grave’s book recommendations in her feature on page 10,

consider reading Malcolm Gladwell’s “Outliers: The Story of Success.” In the book, Gladwell details the strategies and logic behind the idea that it takes 10,000 hours of active engagement and work in a certain realm to truly master the subject.

The book debuted at number one on *The New York Times* bestseller list after its release in 2008 and has remained a favorite of entrepreneurs and inventors since then.

Focusing on outliers, defined by Gladwell as people who do not fit into our normal understanding of achievement, “Outliers” deals with exceptional people, especially those who are smart, rich and successful, and those who operate at the extreme outer edge of what is statistically plausible.

A.J. Titus is president of Signarama, a sign and graphics franchise that’s also the largest brand at United Franchise Group. ●



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Reinvigorate Your Social Media Presence

Your sign shop's social media presence is important.

Social media is a must-have advertising tool for small businesses looking to help spread the word about their offerings and their projects. Clay McDaniel, the current VP of Digital Partnerships at Vista and former CEO of Ripl, has a ton of experience finding the best ways of utilizing social media and has plenty of words of wisdom to make sure your company is using these platforms to their fullest and best potential.

“Social media is a must-have advertising tool for small businesses looking to help spread the word about their offerings and their projects,” says McDaniel.

Each platform offers a viable channel to reach more customers in your market. Read as McDaniel breaks down seven strategies.

1. Consider focusing on a “hero” social platform.

If you feel like you're spread too thin trying to manage all of your social channels, see if one is performing much better than the others and focus your energies there. Some channels don't make as much sense for certain types of businesses. Visual platforms like Facebook and TikTok often benefit sign shops, while text-based platforms like X or Threads may not be the most effective

2. Know your customers.

Small businesses often can't afford to do mass marketing, so you need to make sure your social media activity is pinpointed to your customers' needs. Spend the time to really personify your customer and find out what will speak to them

and that will help as you develop new content throughout the month and year.

3. Set goals for your social pages.

Having a page just to have a page isn't the best strategy, so set some measurable goals so you know what's working and not. Perhaps that means brainstorming new types of content, posting more often or at more regular intervals, or doing more community management on your social media channels.

4. Refresh your business profile images and main images.

Your profile picture and cover/banner image are your most notable visuals on each platform and should feature your logo, or something representative of your company for this upcoming year like a shot of your location, team or key products.

5. Do a feed and follower clean-up.

Whether on Facebook, Instagram or TikTok, if there are personal or business profiles you no longer want updates from, unfollow/unlike them. Leave any groups that are no longer relevant. Consider removing or, if necessary, banning followers (especially inactive or fake ones) from your page or profile, as well.

6. Optimize your Instagram bio.

To make sure your Instagram account is up to date, edit your profile. Upload a new image, tweak your bio, add a website link. Don't forget enabling a call to action button, add your business category and contact information.

7. Delete or archive old content.

Comb through your past posts and decide if any are outdated or no longer applicable to your business. If you're not yet using Instagram stories for your business, you should start.

Be sure to also go through your past posts to determine if there are any that might spark controversy or seem tone deaf and delete those, as well. ●

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