

Jones Sign Company

All Signs Point to Success

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In 1910 Andrew Jones opened a sign business in Green Bay Wis., under a U.S. flag that waved only 46 stars. The NFL did not exist, so there were no team logos to proudly hang, but Jones quickly found plentiful work, to the point he was repeatedly making additions and outbuildings to make room for advances in sign construction materials, shapes and sizes. Now, 100 years later, Jones Sign Company is still in business and operating nationwide, under a 50-star flag, as well as working in Canada and Mexico. And the company is the official sign company of the Green Bay Packers.

In 1982 John Mortensen, now company president, partnered with his father and bought the then 72-year-old Jones Sign Company from the Jones. Since that time Jones Sign has been steadily increasing the scope of business, outgrowing two ever-larger facilities in the process. Reflecting on the direction of Jones Sign, Mortensen says, "We are in full-blown growth mode. We have plans to double the sales of the company in the next two years." Mortensen verifies that the work is lined up and the company is poised for predicted growth, stating, "Our contracts show that we'll be right on pace for that, at least for 2011."

With an increase of work in the books, building on a century of experience, Jones Sign continues to cement its reputation as an industry-leading custom sign manufacturer, service and installation company.

Custom Signage

"We work nationwide for general contractors, doing whatever kind of signage they need," says Mortensen. Manufacturing headquarters are spread across 213,000 square feet outside of Green Bay; in De Pere, Wis., and the company is staffed with over 300 employees. Jones Sign self-performs graphic design, manufacturing and installation work; and subcontracts out glass, masonry and electrical work.

The clientele that Jones Sign serves can be found in almost every private and public sector of the U.S. economy; and, in turn, Jones Sign's products can be found everywhere – sports arenas, theaters, banks, pavilions, malls, convention centers, gas stations, and so on.

Often its clients are found in the shape of nationwide chains. "We do business with a lot of chain stores, as they add to their footprint," explains Mortensen. "[A chain store will] put up a couple hundred stores a year and we make sure the signs are on them when they open." Ongoing chain store expansion creates a reliable client base offering up ongoing work.

The company has mastered sign production using a broad range of materials, including plexiglas, electric, pylon and neon materials, and Jones Sign project managers can oversee design assistance, permitting and variances, surveys, traffic and feasibility studies, leasing and financing, manufacturing and installation. The signs can also be made to weather the elements virtually anywhere the customer wants, whether on billboards, awnings, walls, storefronts, roofs, etc. Also, the manufacturing facility

isn't limited to sign making; the company also produces specialty architectural items, such as benches, water fountains, pavilions, ornamental metals, etc.

Jones Sign works on projects as varied in their nature as they are spread out regionally. "Our clients take us to every state, every month," says Mortensen.

Recent Work

Washington D.C. has a large, well-known convention center that spans six square city blocks just north of the heart of the District's downtown. Last year, Jones Sign "completely revamped the convention center's sign package," says Mortensen. "We replaced 2,300 signs with new ones that are made of stainless steel and glass."

The company employed state-of-the-art techniques on the project; for example, a few hundred way-finding signs utilize touchscreen technology inside the convention center, "You can touch the screen and find out when your events are scheduled and how to get there," explains Mortensen. The project took just over a year to complete, and in Mortensen's opinion it was one of the more interesting projects that Jones Sign completed last year.

Additionally, the company completed an extensive exterior sign system for the Spotsylvania Regional Medical Center in Fredericksburg, Va. It was a dual fabrication/ installation job that the company contracted with an outside design firm and the work took approximately eight months.

Hospitals tend to provide a generous amount of work for Jones Sign and the company has a number of clients in the medical sector lined up for 2011. One such project is for the Parkview Regional Medical Center in Fort Wayne, Ind., which Mortensen explains will provide a significant amount of work, as "it's a very large hospital."

Another big project was awarded for the Kansas City Wizards Stadium in Kansas City, Kan. Jones Sign will fabricate and install way-finding signage as part of the new \$203 million soccer stadium project.

Growing and Loving It

Mortensen has been in the signage industry since 1975, and he says of the past 36 years that he's "really enjoyed it."

There's a lot to enjoy, as the company is always facing new challenges that it overcomes head on. Jones Sign is a one-stop sign shop offering design, permitting, leasing, financing, sign movement/upgrade/add-on work, manufacturing, engineering and installation/electrical hookup. Jones Sign also consults its customers on placement, height and other considerations, such as site and feasibility.

Although the economic downturn adversely affected Jones Sign in 2009 and early 2010 – as "projects in the pipeline [for those years] were postponed," explains Mortensen – the company has rebounded, to say the least. "Things are continuing to get better," shares Mortensen of the company's current state of business. Due to this, Jones Sign Company is wholeheartedly investing in its ongoing plans for even further expansion, offering a centenarian company's proven experience directed into the newest, most advanced techniques.