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Kevin Carty, Classic Exhibits Inc.

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Every January, we share highlights from the previous year and describe what you can expect this year. Think of it as Classic's Holiday Letter, cleverly disguised as a State of the Company announcement. Did you know Billy Jr. got braces in July and Aunt June traveled to Manitoba?



## 2019 STARTED WITH A BANG!

**We posted our largest single sales month and quarter... and then it got weird.** Why weird? Your guess is as good as mine. I've heard several explanations: a shift in the show schedules, political/economic uncertainty, climate change, Bigfoot (according to Mel). But who knows? After a gangbuster Q1, we headed into a Q2 with really high peaks and very deep valleys. We should be used to that given the seasonality of our business. Except we saw the peaks and valleys happen over the course of 2-3 day stretches. Some days we would be flooded with design and build requests and then 4-5 days of crickets, all throughout Q2 and then into Q3.

We normally slow down the last week of October and throughout November. But this past year, that slowdown hit the first week of October. After four slow November weeks, December started building and then YOWSA! **We booked more business in the final three weeks of the year than we did the entire month of October and November combined!**

In the end, **2019 was another strong year** despite the scary roller coaster ride. We are thankful for your trust and willingness to partner with Classic Exhibits and Classic Rental Solutions.

## THE INVISIBLE INC.

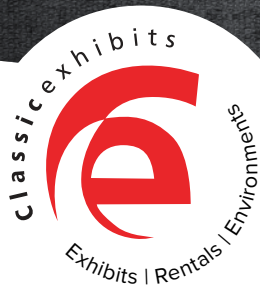
After several years of promoting our "Invisible Inc" model, it finally seems to have taken hold. **We are no longer seen as a portable/modular manufacturer, but as a designer and fabricator of exhibition, event, and environmental work.** That's not to say we've abandoned our portable/modular roots (more on that later), but our custom fabrication grew at a faster pace than our systems sales. **In 2019, almost 60% of our volume was fully custom.** [See an article in Exhibit City News that explains this in more detail.](#)

As you know, you can't succeed in custom (or rentals) without a complementary modular wall system. **Orders for our Gravitee One-Step Modular Wall System soared.** The feedback on the show floor has been nothing short of spectacular as more exhibitors and labor providers see Gravitee in action. The tool-less assembly and no loose parts means it's significantly faster to setup than other systems, saving clients on labor, and there's effectively no lost parts to replace after each show. In 2019, **Classic was granted a utility patent on Gravitee**, making it the ONLY patented modular wall system in the industry. Need we say more.... Or name names? Perhaps not.



## OTHER PROJECTS

For several years, we have made inroads into the Retail, Corporate Environment, and Set Building markets. In 2019, we continued to reach deeper into those markets through the creative work of our distributors. Some exciting examples included **set design builds for a stop-motion animation filmmaker, call center buildouts for a large health insurer, stairwell design and branding for a corporate office, and even an interior replica of the Millennium Falcon from Star Wars.** Lots of interesting and challenging "other" work.



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## ECO-SYSTEMS SUSTAINABLE

Eco-Systems had a great year in 2019 as interest in eco-friendly materials and displays increased. As you already know, Classic and Eco have long been strategic partners with Classic serving as the contract builder for all Eco-Systems builds. **In December, we announced the merging of Eco into the Classic Family beginning in 2020.** We hope you are as excited as we are to add the Eco team, their designs, and their vast sustainable knowledge to the company and the Classic Distributor Network. *Want something built GREEN in 2020 whether an ECO or other Classic Design? Just ask!*



## AWARDS!

We are pretty darn proud to be an **EXHIBITOR Find It Top 40 Exhibit Builder** for the second straight year. And if that wasn't enough, Event Marketer named Classic Exhibits to the **Fab 50 – One of North America's Top 50 Exhibit Designers and Producers.**

We're honored by these awards for two reasons. First, so many of you are also on these lists. It's an honor to be mentioned with you. Secondly, because Classic is largely an invisible, unbranded manufacturer, we rarely get noticed by exhibitors, show organizers, GSC's, and sometimes even custom houses. These awards are largely due to what YOU, our Distributor Partners, have said about us. So thank you! We are truly grateful.

## SYMPHONY PORTABLE DISPLAYS

Our newest product line is almost ready for primetime. It's affordable, elegant....and oh yeah, a TOOL-LESS inline system with seamless graphics! **Symphony will be released later this month.** For a bit of a tease about the product, [see this video where Mel explains our goals for developing the system.](#) Did I mention it's **built right here in the USA** and not a not another ho-hum import? Honestly, does the world really need another tube display system?

We are excited to hear your thoughts and see your client's reaction to the Symphony Portable Display. Attending **EXHIBITORLIVE?** We will be **showcasing Symphony in a 10 x 15 (booth #242).**



## EXHIBIT DESIGN SEARCH

Exhibit Design Search went through a lot of changes last year, including an annual subscription fee. We appreciate that most Classic Partners saw the value of EDS and supported our efforts to further develop the most robust online gallery in the marketplace. **Based on your feedback, we added a Rewards Program this year that credits all or 50% of the EDS subscription based on sales thresholds.** As many of you can attest, you hit those thresholds in 2019 and are not paying a dime for EDS in 2020.

## ASSOCIATIONS

Honestly, after going to EDPA ACCESS for about 15 years and being on the Board of Directors for almost 10 years, ACCESS 2019 was the most inspiring one yet. The sessions added more collaboration than ever for business owners/managers to sit together, share, and even challenge each other on unique ways to better their businesses. The keynotes and speakers were on target about where we are headed as an industry and where we need to look to meet our current challenges, such as our aging labor workforce, what it means to be experiential, and how we as builders can engage agencies and their clients.





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**Katina Rigall Zipay,**  
Creative Director

## WIE, FIT, AND SEGD

Katina Rigall Zipay, our Creative Director, continued to invest time and energy in **outreach like the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), the Society of Experiential Graphic Designers, and Women in Exhibitions** (along with Jen LaBruzza). Below are Katina's notes:

*As an alumni of the FIT Master's in Exhibition Design program, I adjudicated their capstone event for the sixth time in 2019. It's always inspiring to see the work of future designers and an honor to serve in this capacity. At EXHIBITORLIVE 2019, I spoke to the FIT students about my experience and trajectory as an exhibition design professional. I also led them in a walking tour around the show floor and discussed the strengths/weaknesses/trends in our industry. In December, I was hired as an adjunct professor for FIT to teach classes for the new EDPA Exhibit Design Certification starting in 2020.*

*My leadership role with WIE has grown this year. I organized and emceed the 2nd Annual Breakfast at EXHIBITORLIVE with 200 women in attendance, and I've organized a board of advisors and moderated monthly phone calls resulting in a new mission statement and an overhaul of the WIE mentorship program. I also had the opportunity to help organize the WIE meeting at EDPA.*

*This year, Classic and I became members of SEGD. Jen and I attended the 2019 annual SEGD event "Experience Austin" where we exhibited on behalf of Classic.*



## RENTALS RENTAL RENTALS

Would you like to rent that? That question never gets old and we are thankful for the growth of Classic Rental Solutions year after year. Jim Shelman and his team have made renting as easy, if not easier than purchasing a new exhibit. EDS now has rental prices for many of the new builds. In turn, we also added purchase prices to every Rental Exhibit shown in EDS. **Rentals were the largest growth segment of our business in 2019.**

The newest trend is the "RentChase" – **Rent what will change, purchase what won't.** As a vertically integrated designer and builder (i.e., we aren't buying modular panels from someone else), we have the luxury of mixing and matching rental and purchase so your client gets exactly what they need at each show.

## SALES TEAM

Our sales team grew twice. **In the spring we hired Harold Mintz**, a very familiar face to many distributors. Almost immediately, Harold elevated our annual company BBQ by introducing a Watermelon Seed Spitting Contest. Who knew we would get a sales professional who could also pucker? More recently, with the merging of Classic and Eco, **we added Tom Beard** to the fold. Tom has been a longtime friend and resource to many Classic Distributors.

**Jen LaBruzza, our National Sales Manager, has gone from covering EVERY STATE and PROVINCE, to managing a solid sales team and a smaller territory.** This will allow her more time to manage the sales process and coordinate online partner trainings including Shared Knowledge University. We feel fortunate to have an outstanding sales team representing the Classic.



**Harold Mintz,**  
Regional Sales Manager

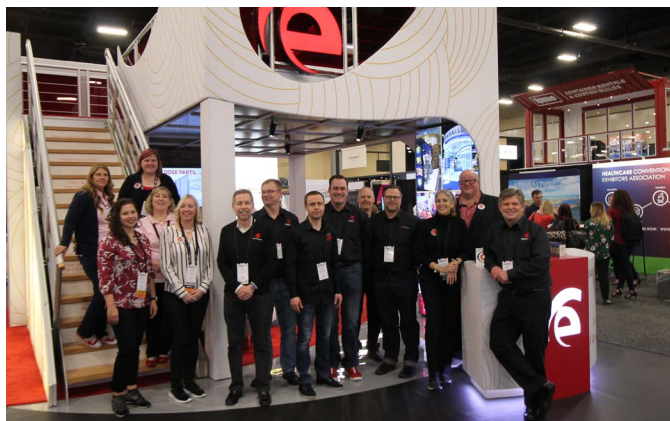


**Tom Beard,**  
Regional Sales Manager

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

Many of you noticed a big change in Customer Service in September. At first it was a trial run, but it became permanent in December. **We now have dedicated estimators**, meaning Bob Beuhl and Colleen Crawford are responsible for purchase estimating and quoting. Edie and I will assist with any overflow.

Once a project sells, PMs like Kelly, Paras, Alex, and Tim step in to partner with a dedicated detailer to process and guide the order through Production. You may be asking, "So what's the big whoop Kevin?" Well, it is a big deal actually. Prior to this change a PM did it all – estimating/quoting, order processing and even some detailing. If a PM had 10 estimates to do, but you just sent them a 30 x 30 island PO, they had to juggle both. **This new process has proven to be much faster at turning around quotes and orders.**



Wow, that was a lot. My apologies. And I didn't even get to all the other changes like new charging stations, design team updates, and revised marketing tools, but I'll save that for a future post. Or simply **stop by one of our TWO BOOTHS at EXHIBITORLIVE (Booth #242 & #220)** this year and I'll bend your ear.

Lastly, we never forget that we GET to do this because of you! Please know that we understand that and are grateful for the trust. **We appreciate your partnership.**

Wishing You a Very Prosperous 2020!

Kevin Carty  
Executive Vice President  
Classic Exhibits Inc.