



ACE RETAILERS GRATEFUL TO BE BACK IN-PERSON FOR FALL 2021 CONVENTION

👤 Lindsey Thompson 🕒 September 27, 2021 📁 Industry News

For the first time in over 18 months, Ace Hardware retailers from around the country came together in-person for the Fall 2021 Ace Hardware Convention. The convention was held Sept. 21-23 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. After holding its Spring 2020, Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 conventions online, being in-person was a welcome change.

“Our retailers wanted this and they are energized. We did a great job leveraging the digital conventions, but there is nothing like being back face-to-face,” says CEO John Venhuizen. “The team has done an excellent job making sure we have safety protocols in place to be sure people are protected. It’s good to be back.”

The convention retained some aspects of the previous digital sessions, with the general session pre-recorded and shared with participants. Retailers were also given access online to special buys before the start of the show. Along with buying opportunities at the convention, retailers could participate in training sessions that covered a wide variety of topics and hear more about the various services Ace offers its retailers.

Reactions From Retailers

Buck Hurst, owner of Buck's Ace Hardware in Utah, says he has never missed an Ace Convention because he feels they are one of the best ways to advance the business.

"I enjoy learning from my fellow retailers and find these events are how we grow and advance," he says. "The convention pays for itself the first two hours I'm here. We wouldn't have gotten to the level we are now without attending, and we won't make it to the next level unless we continue to engage in these types of events."

Paul Turk, manager of Thatcher's Ace Hardware in Baker City, Oregon, attended the show with fellow Ace manager, Craig Binder from LaGrande Ace Hardware in La Grande, Oregon.

"We're located in the far corner of Oregon, so the Ace Convention gives us a chance to connect with our fellow retailers from around the country," Turk says. "We're also working on some new resets and looking for some new products for the store, as well as some good deals."

For Eric Hassett, owner of Hassett Ace Hardware in California, the convention is a chance to learn from the various educational sessions offered and make connections.

"Networking is the value I get out of coming to these events, making those connections with fellow retailers and vendors," Hassett says. "It's easy to get microfocused on your store and your area, but at the convention you learn about other trends."

Looking Toward 2022

Venhuizen says that 2021 was a time of blessings and burdens and looking forward to 2022, it will be a "relentless, consistent and determined march up our mountain."

"Our mantra is to meet and beat what we achieved last year and continue up that mountain. We are blessed to be a part of a co-op where everyone works together to achieve our goals," he says.

Labor shortages and logistical issues will be two of the biggest challenges going into next year, Venhuizen says, but he's confident in the ability of Ace's suppliers to help retailers through supply chain headaches.

"Credit in solving these issues also needs to go to our retailers who have created wonderful work cultures where employees want to work," he says. "Our retailers are turning a major pain point—labor shortages—into a competitive advantage."

