ESTA recently announced to members that it had formed a new alliance with NAMM. In order to find out what lay behind this decision and what it means for ESTA’s members, we spoke with ESTA President Jules Lauve, Vice President Todd Spencer, and Executive Director Lori Rubinstein.

Lori Rubinstein: There are a number of reasons behind our decision to work with NAMM. I was first invited to visit the NAMM Show in 2011 and remember being very impressed with how well the show was organized and the multitude of educational and networking opportunities that were available to attendees at no additional charge. We stayed in touch over the years and, shortly after the announcement that Penton would not be renewing its longstanding agreement for ESTA to co-sponsor the LDI Show, NAMM representatives got in touch to talk about an exciting new opportunity that was coming up and that could help replace some of our lost revenue.

The annual NAMM Show, which draws more than 100,000 attendees, had long been bursting the seams of the Anaheim Convention Center, where the show is held every January. So, despite a long-standing desire to expand the show to include all aspects of live event technology, there was simply no room to do so. Beginning in 2018, however, a new 200,000-sq.-ft. building will be coming online that will significantly expand available exhibition space and also free up the arena to be used for hands on training and demos.

Jules Lauve: One of the key things that attracted us to working with NAMM was their innate understanding that you have to build a community in order to bring new exhibitors and attendees to your show. It’s not just about selling floor space; it goes much deeper than that. NAMM has a term they use to describe all the different groups that have found a home at the show—they call them tribes—and they understand the value and unexpected benefits that come from intermixing those different communities.

We really like the idea of partnering with another non-profit organization because they share the same values as ESTA.

LR: At the show this year, a lighting designer told me that many of the bands who are his clients attend the show and how great it is to be able to say, “I want to show you a new effect I’d really like to include on the next tour,” and walk them over to the booth for a live demo.

JL: We really like the idea of partnering with another non-profit organization because they share the same values as ESTA. They continually look for ways to reinvest back into the industry, and their commitment to education particularly caught our attention. Show attendees pay a low $25 admission fee and can take advantage of almost all the diverse educational offerings free of further charge. These include seminars taught by subject matter experts on a variety of topics, short peer-to-peer presentations, and general assembly type events.

LR: Those of us who attended The NAMM Show last January were really impressed at the variety of the more than 150 educational offerings curated to industry segments. Attendees can take advantage of as much as they want without worrying about the cost adding up. The peer-to-peer presentations were very interesting. They happen right on the show floor and involve an industry member making a presentation on something they think would benefit others; from how they solved a technical problem to how they approached a difficult business issue or expanded into a new market for example.

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We all really enjoyed the Breakfast of Champions. This event includes a full breakfast buffet for all show attendees, followed by NAMM President and CEO Joe...
Lamond conducting short interviews with a handful of business owners about how they got their start, how they found their unique niche, or how they capitalized on an unexpected opportunity. The stories proved both fascinating and inspiring.

We strongly encourage members to consider exhibiting at the 2018 show.

Todd Spencer: We believe there is a unique opportunity here for us to work with NAMM to craft educational offerings that will be of real value to our members and to the entire industry. We’ll be focusing on sessions that provide participants with knowledge and skills that are relevant to the work they do every day. We also hope to take a long-term approach to education as well, so that attendees know that they can return to the show each year and build on what they learned the previous year.

In addition to offering courses geared towards entertainment technology professionals, we realize we have a terrific opportunity to educate NAMM attendees who purchase and use our equipment and services, but whose level of technical sophistication has room to grow.

JL: Speaking of those attendees, we think The NAMM Show will offer our exhibiting members access to a wide array of new customers and new markets. Attendees are involved in music production at every level, from small venues to world tours. The show is a must-attend for anyone involved in music, and the goal is to make it a must-attend for anyone involved in live event production. Attendees come from 139 different countries as well as the large home base of Southern California.

TS: NAMM is making a real commitment to create an appropriate show floor for our exhibitors. They have listened carefully to what our requirements are in terms of rigging capacity, light levels, audio levels, etc. They understand that our needs are different from what they are used to and that they have to provide the right conditions for members to successfully exhibit their products. We strongly encourage members to consider exhibiting at the 2018 show. Your booth doesn’t have to be huge—start with a small booth, get to know the show, and grow as it grows.

JL: We look forward to working with NAMM over the coming months and years to build a wonderful new home for the live event technology sector at the show, where our members can increase their knowledge and skills, find new customers and suppliers, and make new connections. ESTA will be moving its Winter Board and Technical Standards meetings to coincide with NAMM beginning this January. We won’t see you on the show floor at LDI, as the ESTA Board decided to put our members’ money into programs benefitting the industry, but we look forward to seeing you at The NAMM 2018 Show, January 25 – 28 in Anaheim.