

THREE GENERATIONS OF PROMO EXCELLENCE

Discover how Illini grew their small family business into a promotional products powerhouse with ASI by their side.

INTRO

Allison Fine, VP of Operations and part of the third generation of the Fine family at **Illini (asi/62190)**, understands that being a proud family-run business is the key to her company's 75 years of success in the promotional products industry.

Illini's roots can be traced to her grandfather, Jerry Fine, who worked for his uncle's business until they were forced out by a larger competitor. Despite the hardship he and his family faced in this difficult moment, he took it as an opportunity to showcase his entrepreneurial acumen by making the unexpected, forward-thinking pivot to the promotional products industry. Leveraging his established community connections, he began providing products to help local businesses and events stand out. Many of those early items, like ice cream scoops and spatulas, are still offered by Illini today.

Jerry's entrepreneurial spirit, combined with a commitment to quality, service and union ideologies, allowed Illini to grow into the respected company it is today. Three generations later, Allison continues to uphold these same values, focusing on adaptability and a steadfast commitment to meeting the needs of their customers.



"We're all in on promo products. 100 percent."

"Our legacy is a story of excellence, rooted in a commitment to top-notch quality, exceptional customer service and a knack for turning customer ideas into a reality," Allison said.

With ASI® by their side, Illini has grown into an industry leader, complete with robust in-house graphics, printing and packaging departments with capabilities that allow them to deliver customized solutions efficiently.

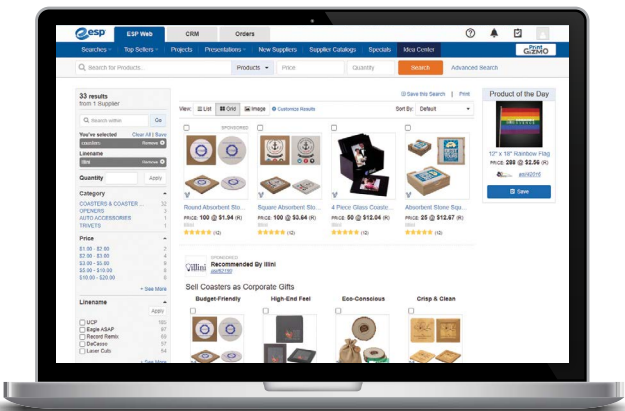
ASI: AN ESSENTIAL BUSINESS PARTNER

Allison attributes Illini's ability to grow beyond a regional success into a global operation to their relationships with ASI. She points to ESP+, the industry's #1 product sourcing platform home to more than 1.2 million promo products, as the biggest reason for their sustained growth.

"ESP+ has been a great platform," Allison said. "The more resources we put into ESP+ leads to more phone calls and general inquiries about our business."

Allison also takes advantage of ASI advertising and marketing opportunities to stay connected with distributor clients and get the Illini name out there to interested prospects. She cites email marketing and digital advertising opportunities within ESP+ as touchstones to a great all-around business strategy.

"We use ASI tools to show up higher in search results, which results in more conversions and more distributor connections," Allison said. "With our marketing efforts in ESP+, we see a direct correlation to engagement on our website."



"Becoming an ASI member is the only way to get in front of distributors and start building business relationships."

A PRODUCT FOR EVERY CLIENT

One of Illini's core philosophies is that promotional products are for everyone. No matter how big or small your budget, no matter what market your business caters towards, everyone has a use for branded merchandise.

"Trying to find diverse products that work for all different types of industries and end-users is key," Allison said.

Illini works with distributors across all the top markets in promo – education, healthcare, construction/

manufacturing, finance and nonprofits, just to name a few – by casting a wide net and ensuring that all their customers can find what they need.



SUSTAINABLY MINDED

As highlighted in **ASI's Promo for the Planet**, sustainability is often cited as a major purchasing decision for end-users, and suppliers are taking action to ensure that their products are ethically sourced, socially responsible and long lasting to not only meet client demands but ensure a more sustainable, eco-conscious supply chain for future generations.

Illini has made it a core mission to use their industry power to enact immediate change. As part of the One Tree Planted program, Illini plants one tree for every planting kit order. The program has been a huge success, resulting in thousands of trees planted and contributing to environmental projects, such as rebuilding monarch butterfly habitats, rejuvenating the Congo Basin rainforest and supporting wildlife recovery in Canada.



STAYING IN THE KNOW

You don't become one of the most trusted suppliers in promo without having your finger on the pulse of the industry, and thanks to ASI research and education, Illini is able to understand new trends and breaking news as it develops and can adapt their day-to-day business operations accordingly.

Allison specifically highlighted e-newsletters, developed and curated by ASI's award-winning editorial team, for keeping her informed on current events, trending products and much more.

*"I pretty much read every newsletter ASI sends out," Allison said.
"I rely on ASI newsletters to figure out what's going on in the industry,
how it's going to impact our company and what I can do about it."*

HITTING THE ROAD

Success in the promotional products industry can come in many forms, and Illini has proven that digital marketing efforts can yield positive results. However, no business strategy can be considered well-rounded without in-person relationship building, and Allison has found **ASI Show®** to be the perfect vehicle for connecting suppliers and distributors under one roof.

*"Our team attends every ASI Show we can," Allison said.
"The shows are a great opportunity to connect face to face
with distributors and showcase our products in person.
It's important for distributors to touch and interact with
our products ... not just see them on a screen."*



Ready to explore all the ASI benefits Allison mentioned and more?

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