

COLUMBIA LIGHTING



NEW ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM BENEFITS CONSUMERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

by John Ballard

*Above: EnergyMax™ Office Environment
Opposite page: Martin Werr,
Director of Marketing, Columbia Lighting*

THE LIGHTING INDUSTRY IS OFTEN regarded as a mature industry, offering limited changes to consumers who are slow to adopt new technologies. However, Greenville, SC-based Columbia Lighting has taken a leadership role in developing a program centered on new energy efficient products and energy solutions designed to improve the environment and save their customers money. Called the Columbia Lighting Energy Solutions Initiative, or CreateChange™, Columbia launched the program in May 2007. According to Martin Werr, Director of Marketing for Columbia, the intent of the program is to create an

internal direction to develop products that are energy solution specific, with a goal of saving the consumer at least 20 percent energy costs without sacrificing lighting levels or quality.

The CreateChange program consists of lighting fixtures and products, tools for evaluating energy savings and lighting levels, and an array of informational brochures and Internet information that summarizes the advantages to the end user. The advantages touted by Columbia for using CreateChange products include:

Columbia Lighting, a subsidiary of

THE ADVANTAGES OF CREATE-
CHANGE PRODUCTS

- Reduction of energy cost for lighting a facility.
- Utility rebates for energy efficient lighting.
- Tax incentives up to 60 cents per square foot for adopting energy efficient building practices through the Energy Policy Act (EPAAct).
- LEED certification for utilizing green building practices.
- Potential for significant reduction of greenhouse gases.
- Adherence to recently enacted state and local government mandates.



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Hubbell Lighting, focuses on commercial, industrial, and institutional business, with a customer mix that includes schools, hospitals, offices, warehouses, factories, and big box retail outlets. They have three current CreateChange products and will add seven more by the end of 2008.

The company goal for the CreateChange products is 15 percent of total sales by

the end of 2008, and according to Werr they currently stand 40 percent ahead of schedule. “We’re pleasantly surprised by how enthusiastic the response has been,” says Werr. Approximately two-thirds of Columbia’s product development budget is directed toward CreateChange.

In conjunction with the CreateChange program, Columbia has developed a marketing blitz, which includes the launch of a Web site, www.create-change.com, and a series of concept awareness meetings throughout the country. In addition, informational brochures are available, as is “payback analysis” software, which allows building owners the ability to calculate the length of time needed to receive their return on investment. “One of my guiding principles is to keep the program simple, understandable, and real, so it’s easy for



CREATECHANGE PRODUCTS

1) EnergyMax™ is a two-lamp parabolic fluorescent fixture that provides the same light levels as a three-lamp fixture but with up to 34 percent energy reduction. The current three-lamp parabolic is the most commonly used office lighting fixture.

2) VersaBay™ is a fluorescent high bay designed to replace the 400-watt metal halide fixtures popular in factory, warehouse, and big box retail settings. It offers equivalent or better light levels and quality with up to 52 percent energy reduction.

3) ZPT™ provides full distribution light with an aesthetic flair for offices, schools, and hospitals and energy savings up to 34 percent.

Above: VersaBay™ Warehouse Environment

a customer to understand and measure what the benefits to them will be,” says Werr. “It’s great to save energy,” he adds, “but it’s irresponsible to do so without providing the quality lighting and appropriate levels of lighting. That’s a primary goal of the CreateChange initiative.”

The largest challenge to the CreateChange program to date has been the technical aspect. “We set pretty high standards on ourselves,” Werr says. “To say that you have to get equivalent light levels and quality and still save 20 percent of energy, that’s a pretty demanding standard in an industry that was already emphasizing energy efficiency.” To that end, Columbia is substantially increasing their engineering resources, and they are partnering heavily with their raw material suppliers to jointly develop more efficient reflector, refractor, and ballast technology. The other challenge is the nature of the lighting industry itself as a mature industry. “You can introduce them (new products), but

to try to get people to adopt them—particularly if it costs a little bit more—is always a challenge.”

Werr says the lighting industry has affected only incremental changes over the past 20 years in their attempts to deliver more light for less money, but Columbia is at the forefront of changing that. “What I’d hope for the future is to have CreateChange initiate a groundswell throughout the industry,” he says. “That’s what the intent of CreateChange is. We didn’t want to sit by and just watch these gradual incremental changes.” GBQ