



TRAINING

Got lighting software?

BY CRAIG DILOUIE

THE INDUSTRY'S LEADING MANUFACTURERS of lamps and ballasts now offer a variety of software tools for electrical distributors—including supercharged energy calculation programs that generate upgrade economic analysis and proposals for customers, complete online catalogs and workplace environments, and online programs that enable generation of customized marketing materials for ongoing promotions. As software continues to integrate with an increasingly interactive Web, expect manufacturers to offer even greater services. Here are several key programs currently offered:

SMARTCALC from Advance. Powered by Advance, SMARTCALC was designed to help the company's sales reps support distributors by easily building energy audit reports. These reports enable distributors to quickly assess customer upgrade opportunities and build proposals.

"Assuming that distributors are actively canvassing their customer bases for upgrade opportunities, they can get maximum benefit from using SMARTCALC by proactively working with their Advance representative to create professional analysis and proposals that will trigger end users to take action and initiate the upgrade process," said Doug Stoneman, senior product manager.

SMARTCALC uses preloaded lamp and ballast data while requiring only basic information about the specific project—such as energy rates and operating hours—to generate solutions for up to 10 lighting applications with associated economic results. Specialized graphics built into the program produce charts that visually highlight proposal elements such as project costs and cash flow.

"Distributors have definitely become more savvy about using software and are more aware than ever about opportunities in the lighting upgrade market," said Stoneman. "The ability for a distributor to effectively deliver these energy- and cost-saving messages to his or her customers will differentiate him or her in a competitive market."

SMARTCALC is currently available to Advance's field sales representatives via PC. The company is planning a Web-based version for use by distributors within the next year.

mySYLVANIA.com from Osram Sylvania. Osram Sylvania created mySYLVANIA.com as a B2B workplace for business partners and distributors, offering each user personalized news and product updates specifically geared to their business interests and role in the lighting industry. The site has been awarded *TED Magazine's* Best of the Best Award in the Web site category for three years running (2003, 2004, and 2005).

"mySYLVANIA.com is the central resource for customer-specific pricing, order status, product availability, and numerous other transaction details, as well as a wealth of industry-related resource/solution information," said John Wilson, manager of e-commerce and business development.

Over the past year, a number of new tools and applications have been added, such as the launch of LeadsOnline, a marketing campaign module that allows users to select a target market segment and the appropriate mail piece, form a trading area, and specify a campaign date. Additional features include an e-catalog, programs and promotions, lamp and system comparisons, retrofit options, and recommended replacements.

Sylvania distributors can sign up for mySYLVANIA.com at www.mySYLVANIA.com/register.



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Value*Light from GE. “For many end users, it’s bewildering to even think about sorting through all the choices of energy-saving products available today,” said Sri Rahm, senior training specialist at GE Consumer and Industrial’s Lighting Institute. “Most of the time, end users ask themselves two questions: How much is it going to cost me to do this upgrade and is it worth it?”

To address these questions, GE developed Value*Light, designed to enable distributors to partner with their customers by conducting in-depth lighting audits quickly and cost effectively. Given several variables specific to the application, the software helps distributors build professional proposals “in under five minutes,” including detailed financial information such as cash flow charts, investment calculations, payback, ROI, and net present value. Value*Light won a Best of Category award at the New Product Showcase at 2004 Lightfair International.

“GE distributors with Value*Light have the ability to provide a detailed cost justification for even major lighting projects involving several areas with different lamps,” explained Rahm. Other features include estimating air conditioning savings and environmental impact, incorporation of regionally specific inflation rates for energy and labor, a built-in database of GE lamps and ballasts, fixture count and energy impact of dimming, and help in planning maintenance schedules, including group lamping intervals.

GE distributors can learn more about Value*Light on GE Elitenet, while other interested parties should contact a GE rep or visit www.GELighting.com.

Print-On-Demand from Philips Lighting. “Marketing savvy is becoming more and more of a necessity in the electrical marketplace,” said Jennifer Reyes, marketing manager, professional lighting, for Philips Lighting. “Customers need to be educated and excited about distributors’ current product offerings, but often, distributors may not have the resources to design and produce branded, effective marketing pieces.”

Distributors seeking marketing support can use Philips’s Print-On-Demand at www.lightingpod.com, which enables them to print professionally designed marketing and sales materials with their logo. “What used to take weeks to design, proof, and print can now be done and received by the distributor within a matter of days,” said Reyes.

Distributors can co-brand product bulletins, posters, literature, advertisements, direct mail, promotional materials, flyers, and other sales materials. Print-On-Demand allows users to upload icons and enter distributor- and branch-specific information so they can more strongly relate direct mailings and other marketing efforts to their customers. The printed materials are shipped directly to the distributor, typically within seven to 10 days of the initial online request.

Reyes added, “There is no need to invest time and money in a design company. With a few clicks, distributors can place their logo in a preset template and get them professionally printed.”

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Print-On-Demand users have the option to customize their own lighting promotions with Flexible Promotion Kits, which offer all of the elements needed to launch a four- to 12-week program that includes tools to incentivize employees and customers through prize packages. For more information, visit www.lightingpod.com.

Energy Savings Calculator from Universal. Universal Lighting Technologies’ Energy Savings Calculator, available on its Web site and on CD-ROM, computes savings for fluorescent and HID lighting systems. The user inputs the current system configuration—including the fixture type, ballast system, number of fixtures, watts, and local electricity costs—and the Energy Savings Calculator determines an appropriate lighting system configuration and explains the energy savings.

“Universal also has additional calculation tools available for use in generating complete ROIs on retrofit projects,” said Greg Bennorth, director of marketing services. “These software tools are available from our sale representatives.”

For more information about the Energy Savings Calculator, visit www.universalballast.com. ■■■

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LIGHTING DESIGN AID

Lightolier offers “Designing with Light”

Lightolier’s Designingwithlight.com is a personalized online project management site that allows users to select and store the most appropriate lighting fixtures for a given application while providing key information such as budget pricing, lead times, and technical specifications, as well as the ability to build and export fixture schedules.

An accompanying 176-page visual selection catalog gives designers comprehensive application options and specification information for a broad selection of the company’s products.

For more information, circle 302 on the Direct Info Card.

