

Don't miss the FREE ALA seminar at Jan. Market: *Gaining the Advantage In Tough Times*

Date: Sunday, Jan. 18
Location: ALA Seminar Center
Time: 8 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Showroom Uses Message Boards to Promote Proper Lighting

If you take a look at message board Web sites such as Yahoo!Answers (<http://answers.yahoo.com>), you will often see consumers asking each other questions about lighting. Andy Grochowski, LS, owner of Lighten Up Chambersburg in Chambersburg, Pa., uses his knowledge of the industry to give them good answers.

"I am dedicated to helping people get light right," says Grochowski. "I try and promote lighting and help educate consumers about the lighting industry, mainly to correct so many misconceptions and notions some people have."

Grochowski is careful not to use his influence to take business from other showrooms—"I have had a few inquiries about buying products, but I try to guide them to their local lighting showroom"—but he does list his showroom Web site on every answer.

"Anyway you can increase the number of visits to your Web site, the farther up the list you get on searches," explains Grochowski. If someone searches for "lighting in Pennsylvania," for instance, Lighten Up Chambersburg wants its Web site to be as close to the top of the search results as possible. This can be achieved in part by increasing the number of visitors and links to the site.

Grochowski's tip for other showrooms is to pursue any avenue available to increase business. "Use any means necessary to stay afloat," he advises. "The Web can help communicate with the younger generations whom we count on for future growth."

Atlantic Electric Uses Own Building to Demonstrate Outdoor Lighting for Customers

At Atlantic Electrical Supply's showroom in Richmond, Va., owners David and Stephen Levet hatched a bold plan to add outdoor lighting to their showroom.

"The whole project started out as a little outdoor maintenance," said Stephen, secretary/treasurer of Atlantic Electric. "I came to work one day to find my cousin, David, cutting down 40-year-old holly bushes. After investing in an electric chain saw (yes, it had to be electric), the holly bushes were history, crepe myrtles were planted and brick edging was installed."

But as the winter wore on, the cousins started to toy with the idea of creating outdoor showrooms by installing landscape lighting in the new beds.

"I made diagrams of our beds and submitted them to several outdoor lighting manufacturers," said Stephen. "We asked the manufacturers if they would be interested in designing our outdoor lighting displays."

They also asked the manufacturers to supply the fixtures.

"It was an unusual request," notes Stephen. "We wanted the manufacturers to design the lighting and pay for the material – not a normal use of co-op money."

Of the manufacturers contacted, four fellow ALA members accepted the challenge: Progress Lighting, Kichler Lighting, Hinkley Lighting and Hanover Lantern. The Levets assigned each manufacturer an area outside the showroom.

"We reviewed the manufacturers' lighting plans to make sure fixture styles were not being duplicated because we wanted to feature as many

products and lighting methods as possible," said David, president of Atlantic. "Today, we have approximately 70 different fixtures on display."

David and Stephen did the installations themselves. In addition to decorative fixtures spotlighting plantings in the beds, the outdoor areas include ground-level spots washing the brick walls, various pathway lights, deck and under-rail lighting and parking lot lighting.

The lighting is placed on timers which turn the fixtures on at 7 p.m. and off at midnight. After midnight, a decorative parking lot light switches on for security.

"Manual override switches on the timers allow us to turn the lights on during the day," said Stephen, "but we encourage customers shopping for landscape lighting to visit us at night. Being able to see and compare fixtures and lighting methods is very helpful for the consumer."

A sales staff trained in landscape lighting is also helpful for customers.

"We have trained our sales staff to design and layout landscape lighting jobs for customers taking into account aesthetics, safety, security and voltage drop," said Stephen.

"Our landscape lighting sales have increased significantly in the last two years, and we have been able to position Atlantic Electric as the landscape lighting expert in our market."

The project that began as "a little outdoor maintenance" has led to a whole new profit source for Atlantic Electrical Supply. As Stephen Levet says, "There is simply no other showroom in our market that has anything like our landscape lighting displays."

Have a story idea or sales tip to share?

Please e-mail your ideas to Sherri Kelley at skelley@americanlightingassoc.com.