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Lighting Unlimited: Investing in ENERGY STAR® – An ENERGY STAR Lighting Showroom Project

Bert Heuser, President of Lighting Unlimited, Ocala, Florida, developed a simple formula for increasing sales and profits: Selling and promoting ENERGY STAR qualified residential lighting fixtures and ceiling fans. He quickly learned that investing in ENERGY STAR is an easy way to gain market share in Florida, and positions Lighting Unlimited as the best local source for ENERGY STAR qualified lighting fixtures.

In one year, sales of ENERGY STAR qualified products grew from zero to five percent of the store's total sales. Bert's successful ENERGY STAR marketing strategy for Lighting Unlimited included: stocking a variety of fixtures, creating special ENERGY STAR displays, training his sales force, running a unique advertising campaign, and partnering with builders for consumer outreach. This created a new source of profit for Lighting Unlimited, and Bert expects his profits from ENERGY STAR will continue to grow.



and no local showrooms were selling ENERGY STAR qualified products. His first step was to start stocking and displaying fixtures. He used a combination of vendors including Sea Gull, Juno, Lithonia, and Minka Aire. This provided Lighting Unlimited with a complete selection of fixture types, finishes, and styles to meet customers' single fixture or complete lighting package needs.

Sales Strategies that Work

Bert states that it is "crucial to have trained salespeople who can communicate with customers about ENERGY STAR and the lighting options available." These trained salespeople are key to increased ENERGY STAR sales, which leads to higher dollar sales and higher profits for Lighting Unlimited.

Once the products were on display and the sales force was trained, Lighting Unlimited launched a unique advertising campaign. Bert created advertisements around the theme of "energy stars" against the background of the Milky Way to showcase lighting fixtures and fans. Bert reported that the ads caught the public's interest and new customers came to the showroom wanting to learn more about ENERGY STAR qualified lighting fixtures.

Building Key Relationships for Success

Lighting Unlimited did not rely on advertising alone for outreach to their clients. Bert wanted to increase the public's awareness of their ENERGY STAR qualified offerings, and ensure that clients choose Lighting

"Advertising the ENERGY STAR products we sell was a simple investment with a huge payback"

—Bert Heuser, President, Lighting Unlimited

Bert realized that the ENERGY STAR program was growing nationwide and that investing in ENERGY STAR qualified products would provide Lighting Unlimited an opportunity for growth. He also recognized that a market gap existed in his area, as no utilities were offering incentives



Unlimited for their energy-efficient lighting needs. To accomplish this goal, Lighting Unlimited worked with their ENERGY STAR manufacturers to provide lighting packages to eight model homes that were part of the local "Parade of Homes."



Over 8,000 consumers toured the homes and had the opportunity to see ENERGY STAR qualified lighting fixtures and fans in a natural setting. Hangtags identified all of the ENERGY STAR qualified lighting fixtures and the people showing the homes were trained to answer questions about ENERGY STAR qualified products.

Lighting Unlimited coordinated advertisements with the timing of the Parade of Homes to multiply the impact of the promotion. Bert feels that "having a coordinated advertising campaign with manufacturers, our retail store, and homebuilders really helped to drive local interest in ENERGY STAR lighting." Visitors to the model homes were impressed by the beauty and elegance of many of the fixtures, and sales at Lighting Unlimited began to grow. "Attractive ENERGY STAR chandeliers and ceiling fans draw customers, and demand for these products is really coming from their eye-catching looks. As complete families of products are introduced by manufacturers it gets easier and easier to sell the products," comments Bert.

Through outreach, product displays, and education Bert established that Lighting Unlimited would be the first choice for ENERGY STAR qualified lighting fixtures. Bert comments: "once people understand the benefits and practicality of ENERGY STAR products they are eager to buy them." Bert also noted that these fixtures are appealing to contractors because they are a value-added option for their customers, and are easy to install and maintain.

The Bottom Line

Lighting Unlimited's early investment in ENERGY STAR qualified lighting products and their well-rounded marketing strategy resulted in significant sales growth.

Lighting Unlimited is well equipped to meet the growing demand for energy-efficient products. They currently display over 30 ENERGY STAR qualified SKUs, and give their customers thousands of other options available on order. Regarding builder sales, sixteen new homes have ENERGY STAR qualified lighting fixtures and ceiling fans, and more than half a dozen builders are working with Lighting Unlimited to incorporate ENERGY STAR qualified lighting fixtures into their new developments.

In their first year selling ENERGY STAR, sales have grown to five percent of total lighting sales, leading Bert Heuser to remark, "I am very pleased with the ENERGY STAR program because the products really appeal to customers."

Helpful Hints and Sales Tips

- Work closely with ENERGY STAR program representatives, local utilities, and ENERGY STAR suppliers to devise a successful ENERGY STAR business strategy.
- Leverage ENERGY STAR support and provide sales training to showroom staff.
- Use local media to advertise your ENERGY STAR qualified products and promotions.
- Earn sales staff buy-in through Special Performance Incentive Funds (SPIF's) and other performance-based rewards.
- Work with builders that are also promoting ENERGY STAR qualified products.
- Stock ENERGY STAR qualified residential lighting fixtures at each location.

For More Information...

on the business opportunities of selling ENERGY STAR, contact Jeffrey Schwartz, ICF Consulting, at 518-452-5986, or by e-mail at jschwartz@icfconsulting.com.

