

After reading the editor's letter (Illuminating Thoughts) in the November issue, I wanted to comment on LEDs. I manage the Lighting Design by Wettsteins showroom in Wisconsin and was also on the judging team for the *Lighting for Tomorrow* competition in 2007 when LLF (now, Cree® LED Lighting Solutions) won the competition for its LR6 product, a complete recessed downlight trim kit and LED light engine.

At the competition, we were very pleased and surprised at the quality of light, regarding color and lumen output. This product had great marks on efficiency with power in and power out. The only thing we did not measure was the footcandles of light on an object compared to another source. I have since brought this product into my showroom, where we have a lighting lab set up with a kitchen display. We offer different sources in recessed lights to show our customers. We put a light

meter under the 15-watt LED recessed retrofit unit as well as under a 50-watt, PAR30 halogen and a 65-watt, BR30 flood. On the countertop, five feet away from these sources, the footcandles of the LED product was 22, while under the BR30 it was 32, and under the 50-watt halogen, 70 footcandles. Although the difference in electrical energy use is dramatic, the loss of light is also significant. In addition, the color rendering of the LED is not as good as the other products.

There are certain issues to address before LED products will win over everyone. One of the biggest stumbling blocks is the cost – LED products are not yet affordable to all. For example, to put this particular retrofit in place, which will easily accommodate most six-inch recessed housings, the price will be about \$130 per unit. If you have 10 existing cans in your kitchen, it will require \$1,300 to replace them plus

you will have less footcandles on your countertop surface!

With all of the energy savings, however, it is difficult to impress people when the return on investment is a long way out. (One of these days I will do the math to figure out how long it will take to pay me back at eight cents per kilowatt hour.) We have embraced energy-saving fixtures in our showrooms, but we would like to be more encouraged by LEDs.

I have a passion for lighting and enjoy new products, plus there is a lot of merit in energy savings. Sometimes, however, the cart is put in front of the horse and there is a big push too soon to go with designs just for the sake of something different without fully testing or understanding how they can be installed in real world applications.

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