

MAKING MONEY – AS EASY AS SCREWING IN A LIGHT BULB (CONTINUED)

In our last Green Sheet, we talked about how to save energy and make some easy money by screwing in a few light bulbs in the back-of-house. Now these weren't just any old light bulbs, these were compact fluorescent lamps or "CFLs" for short, and just like our laptop computers, these little high tech wonders are continually evolving and growing more user friendly. Of course, the friendliest thing about these CFLs is the way they can increase your profits!

We know that CFLs work great in the kitchen, but is it possible to use them in the front-of-house? The answer is yes, as long as we remember a couple of important rules: keep it classy with energy efficiency and be aware of the dimming dilemma.

Keep It Classy with Energy Efficiency

A wise engineer who works with Southern California Edison pointed out in one of his seminars the practical difference between conservation and energy efficiency. He explained that conservation is simply the blunt act of reducing energy-use, sometimes referred to as "freezing in the dark", while energy efficiency involves reducing your energy-use in such an artful way that nobody ever notices the change. Everything stays "warm and well-lit." In your dining rooms and other public spaces, energy efficiency is the name of the game. You should never have to do anything that is unattractive in order to save energy!

Here's an example of a classy CFL retrofit. Suppose you have hanging fixtures over your tables and you have 60 watt incandescent "globe" style light bulbs screwed into those fixtures. You can replace those light bulbs with high-quality, globe type, CFLs for about \$12 each. Since you will be using the "warm white" CFLs, your customers will never notice the difference. You, however, will notice the difference as money saved. Over the 10,000-hour life of each one of those lamps, you will save about \$70 dollars in energy and will avoid changing out between 5 and 10 burned out incandescent light bulbs. Your net savings ends up being about \$60. If you have 20 of those fixtures in your dining room, then you are making \$1,200 on a \$240 investment. Not bad!

Here's another classy retrofit. Many restaurants have menu boards that are lit with an array of floodlights suspended on tracks from the ceiling. There are CFL floodlights that look remarkably similar to incandescent floodlights in both size and light output. A 19 watt, warm-white, CFL flood is a good match for a 75 watt R30 incandescent flood. Once again, this change out will save you about \$70 in energy over the 10,000 hour life of the CFL and you will break even on the lamp costs since this CFL flood will replace about 5 regular floods. If you have 10 lamps on that menu board, then you're pocketing an extra \$700. Easy Money!

One very common mistake that you want to avoid is using the "spring" style CFLs (the curly ones) or the "tube" type CFLs anywhere that your customers can actually see them. They are great hidden behind wall sconces or under lampshades but they are not classy when exposed and they create glare that is uncomfortable to your customer's eyes. Stick

with the globes, floods, and other CFLs that look just like the light bulbs you are replacing.

The Dimming Dilemma

Here lies the big headache for the restaurateur seeking energy efficiency. Dining rooms are full of lights on dimmers and if you screw a typical CFL into a socket controlled by a dimmer, then it will fail quickly. There are dimming CFLs on the market, but they are more costly and the technology is not fully mature – meaning that you want to proceed with caution. Work with a reputable lighting supplier if you are interested in investigating this technology.

In the meantime, you can get around the dimming dilemma somewhat by asking yourself whether a group of lights really needs that dimmer after all. If you dim the lights in your dining room to create ambience, then by all means stick with your current lighting scheme and don't play with the magic, but if you have lights that are typically set at one level all the time (hallways, restrooms, entry ways), then consider ditching the dimmer and installing CFLs. Both of the “classy retrofit” examples above are commonly applied in restaurants where dimmed lights are not necessary to the dining experience.

One Final Tip for Fine Dining

Many restaurants are beautifully lit with small MR16 halogen spotlights. There is no CFL that can come close to replacing these lamps – they are crisp, clean, and classy! But, you can save energy by using a special type of “infrared restricted” halogen spot called an MR16IR. These cost about \$2 more per lamp than the standard MR16s and they are easy to find if you call a lighting supplier. The trick with these lamps is to buy a box and use them to replace the regular MR16s as they burn out. A 37 watt IR will replace a standard 50 watt and a 50 watt IR will replace a standard 75 watt. You might think these 13 watt and 25 watt savings are small pickings until you start counting all the MR16s you have installed! (Lighting designers love these spots and sometimes get a little carried away.) Remember, to be cost effective, don't replace working MR16s with the IRs. Wait until they burn out and then slip in the MR16IRs.

Front of House Lighting Is Fun

It's part of the experience that keeps people coming out to restaurants. So, set your standards high, purchase quality lamps from name brand manufacturers - they'll last longer and perform better. And, remember to turn those lights off when the dining room is empty!

These energy saving tips are offered by the Food Service Technology Center (FSTC), an unbiased food service resource center located in San Ramon, CA and funded by California utility ratepayers under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission. For more information on the FSTC and for our schedule of free energy efficiency seminars, please visit our website at www.Fishnick.com. The FSTC is a member of the California Restaurant Association.