



LIGHTING

# OUTSOURCING LIGHTING SYSTEMS — DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE

A lighting maintenance contractor can help you discover the cost of light.

**Gary McGregor**



**H**ow many employees does it take to change a light bulb? The answer for more and more companies is none; not a single employee. Companies are increasingly outsourcing the whole process of lighting design, installation, maintenance and updating and are reaping big rewards.

Typically, the commercial, industrial or institutional lighting buyer is primarily concerned with buying supplies at the best price and then addressing problems later on as they arise, which they inevitably do. This is because companies normally take their lighting system for granted, as long as the system works and customers don't complain.

Buyers generally have a contract with a regular lamp and ballast sup-

plier that meets their requirements on an as-needed basis. When employees or tenants notice a lamp out, replacements are brought up from stock and installed by a jack-of-all-trades maintenance person or maybe even a store clerk. Hard to reach fixtures that require a special service call are often ignored until enough units have malfunctioned to warrant the maintenance expense.

## COST OF LIGHT

Most companies are not aware of the financial impacts and proven positive effects of cost effective, quality lighting on people, productivity and profits. They are typically unaware of the cost of light and the factors that affect getting full value for their lighting dollar.

That is why so many companies are surprised to learn that there are specialists available who have been providing comprehensive lighting services for over 50 years. These services include consultation, system design, installation, planned maintenance, group relamping and lighting retrofits. By utilizing these services, the user can provide occupants with quality illumination and maximize the company's return on its lighting dollars.

Many of these specialists are members of the International Association

of Lighting Maintenance Contractors (NALMCO). Many are also members of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA).

The first thing a specialized lighting maintenance contractor will typically do for the user is explain the impact of cost of light. Typically, the lamps and ballasts on which a user places so much emphasis to get the best deal, represent only 4% to 6% of the annual cost of operating a lighting system. The maintenance costs to change and clean lamps and ballasts usually represent 8% to 12% of annual lighting costs. This means that the bulk of the cost of light is the cost of electricity to operate the system — usually 82% to 88% of annual costs.

Once a customer recognizes what the true cost of light involves, the lighting maintenance contractor can then recommend updated and upgraded systems that may cut the energy portion of the annual costs as much as 45% to 50%. Many users are extremely surprised to learn the impact of new lighting technologies.

## IF IT'S WORKING, DON'T FIX IT

This hands-off concept does not apply to working fluorescent and high intensity discharge lamp and ballast systems because their efficiency normally and inevitably decreases as they get older. Maintenance issues with

these products revolve around:

- Lamps losing delivered light as they get old, as much as 25% to 40% (lumen depreciation).
- Fixtures getting dirty, as much as 40% to 50% (luminaire dirt depreciation).
- Electrical problems (hard starting lamps, low ballast secondary voltage, socket and capacitor problems, etc.).

#### OUTSOURCING LIGHTING SERVICES

Why switch from a do-it-yourself program to outsourcing with a lighting maintenance professional?

- You get lighting expertise. You will save significant operating costs, especially on both energy and maintenance, because the professional lighting maintenance contractor knows what makes the system run optimally.
- You will free up manpower to perform other important facilities tasks.
- You will get all the light you are buying.
- Planned maintenance programs offered by these specialists will prevent

most unexpected surprises and reduce the high costs of rush or emergency service.

- You will prevent most lighting electrical problems by planning in advance and following through with proper inspections and maintenance

Most lighting contractors will provide turnkey or soup-to-nuts service including:

- Lighting system analysis and proposals.
- Quality of lighting recommendations.
- Planned group relamping and fixture cleaning program.
- On-call or emergency services and response.
- Energy saving solutions.
- Equal billing contractual programs.
- Programs for all types of lighting – indoor, area, outdoor, sign, industrial.
- On-going consultation and lighting advice.

The concept of outsourcing lighting services and maintenance to professionals is the same as applied to

HVAC maintenance, elevator maintenance, computer maintenance, cleaning, etc. All are well-accepted and expanding outsourcing services. However, many companies still think they can save a few dollars in lighting by doing it in-house with maintenance generalists. That has not been the case for a growing number of smart energy users who have chosen the outsourcing route and improved their bottom line as well as their lighting, resulting in happier employees, tenants and customers. **PRSM**

GARY MCGREGOR IS THE NATIONAL  
LIGHTING MANAGER FOR UNICCO  
SERVICE COMPANY.

# UNICCO

INTEGRATED FACILITIES SERVICES®

www.unicco.com • (888) 751-9100