

# PROFITABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

WHAT A DIFFERENCE a few decades makes in the technology world.

Remember the original Sony Walkman? When launched in 1979, the portable audio cassette player, equipped with headphones, was small and light enough to clip on to your belt. The Walkman defined state-of-the-art audio. Fast forward to 2009. Compare the original Sony Walkman to the tremendous audio and video storage and playing capacity, portability and pricing of today's MP3 players such as the iPod.

The same "decades apart, worlds apart" comparison can be drawn between light-emitting diode (LED) landscape lighting technologies in the early 1990s and their far-more-evolved offspring now marketed by major lighting manufacturers.

Energy-efficient LED technologies help contractors sell landscape lighting and save customers money. BY **MARTY WHITFORD**

"LEDs have been around since the '60s, but it took three decades for the technology to enter the landscape market in a measurable way, and then another almost two decades for LEDs to evolve into the viable alternative they've become for many landscape applications," says Cruz Perez, vice president of marketing for Simi Valley, CA-based Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting.

"Landscape LEDs had a laundry list of issues needing correction in the early '90s — including light color/

temperature and pricing to name just a few — but that was then," Perez adds. "Now, LEDs are the technology of choice for many landscape lighting applications because they make sense from both a profitability and a sustainability standpoint."

Nick Trostle, owner of Columbus, OH-based Scenic Outdoor Lighting & Design, concurs.

"Landscape LEDs reduce related energy costs 75%, and the lights can out-



live their conventional incandescent and halogen counterparts by a factor of 10 or more — say 10 to 15 seasons versus one or two, Trostle adds.

Just as important, Trostle says landscape LEDs, on average, cost half what they did just three years ago. LED pricing has benefitted from economies of scale on both the purchasing side and the technology side.

Rising utility costs also have given quite a lift to landscape LEDs. “It’s not uncommon to receive a complete pay-back on LEDs in energy savings alone in the first year,” Trostle adds.

Equally enticing, LEDs’ temperatures usually range 4,000 to 4,200 Kelvins — 2,000 Kelvins or so fewer than a few years ago — meaning LEDs more closely match conventional lights in temperature and color.

“The days of designers, contractors and customers feeling blue about LEDs throwing blue light no longer need to be an issue with the right LED lights,” Perez says.

LEDs are quick start, solid state and vibration resistant.

Perez says 80% to 90% of a typical LED light’s energy is used to give off light versus many other lights which expend 80% to 90% of their energy through heat, not light — which not only is wasteful but can be a safety issue.

Perez says LEDs’ low maintenance/high safety features make them ideal for a number landscape lighting applications including, to name just a few: down lights from a tree; water features; anywhere children are drawn to and can access lights; step lights; and hotel interiorscapes.

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting has a portfolio of more than 350 light lines, two-thirds of which are available with LED sources, Perez said.

Additional benefits of LEDs include, according to Perez and Trostle, simplified installation (more fixtures per cable reduces the complexity of installations and related wire and labor costs 50% or more) and the ability to meet



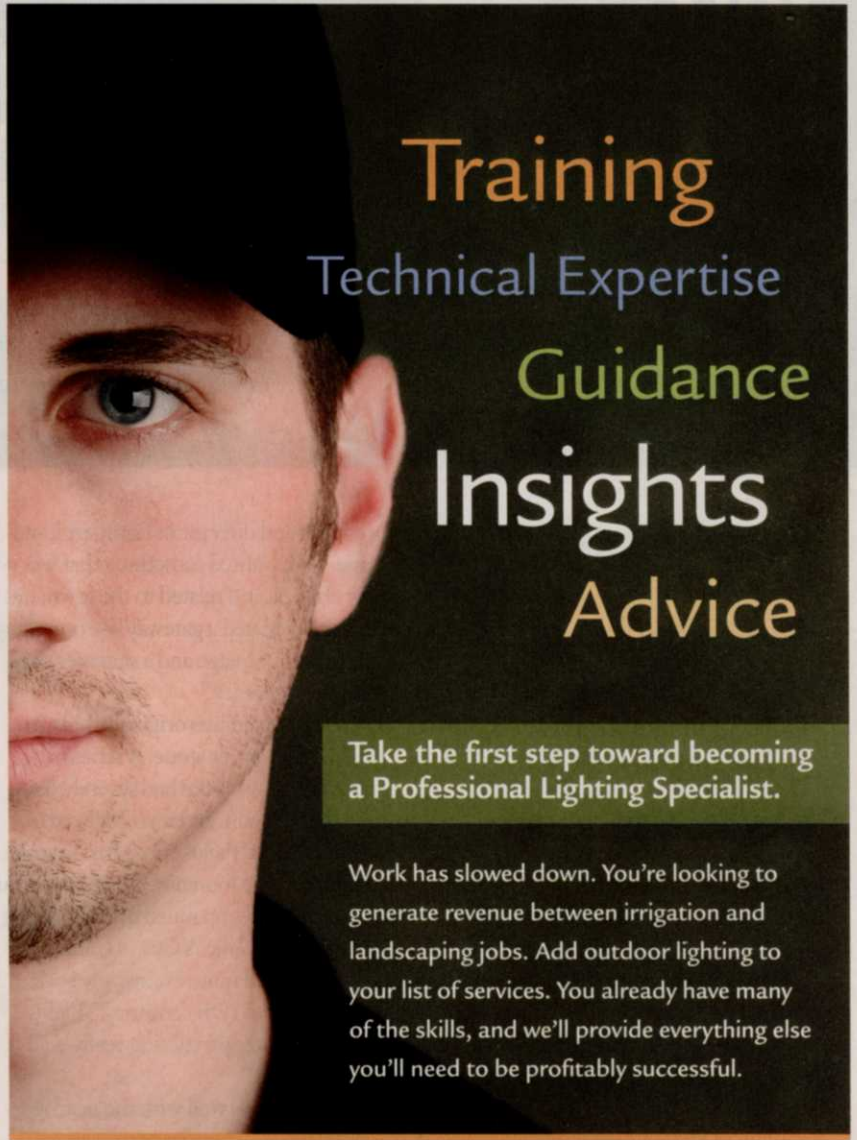
today’s increasingly popular green building requirements.

“Further driving the move to LEDs, there are efficient energy mandates in the Energy Independence & Security Act of 2007, and state legislation such as California’s Title 24,” Perez says.

“Suffice it to say, LED’s time has come — and it’s here to stay.”

Trostle seconds the notion.

“The world is going LED,” Trostle adds. “There are still too many contractors who say, ‘LEDs cost too much and are too blue,’ but my reply to them is, ‘Have you checked out LEDs recently? This isn’t 1990.’” LM



# Training

## Technical Expertise


## Guidance

# Insights

## Advice

Take the first step toward becoming a Professional Lighting Specialist.

Work has slowed down. You’re looking to generate revenue between irrigation and landscaping jobs. Add outdoor lighting to your list of services. You already have many of the skills, and we’ll provide everything else you’ll need to be profitably successful.



**VISTA  
PROFESSIONAL  
OUTDOOR  
LIGHTING**

Make it your business to contact us today.  
Call 800-766-VISTA or visit [www.vistapro.com](http://www.vistapro.com).