



Robbins Diamonds

DO YOU LIGHT UP YOUR CUSTOMERS LIFE?

To get the WOW without the whoops in your store's lighting, choose a combination of light sources. It saves money, is more energy efficient and adds drama.

Highlight your merchandise with a variety of lighting solutions and soften the support spaces. Focal point lighting needs to be 10 times brighter than the light needed in the aisles and in areas where merchandise is not displayed.

Use a combination of fluorescent, ceramic metal halide, tungsten halogen, LED and fiber optic lighting. Fluorescent is still considered the workhorse standard for ambient or indirect light. Today's darling: ceramic metal halide (CMH) produces an efficient bright white light and renders colour well. Tungsten halogen relies on heating a tungsten filament to produce light and is less efficient, although it is the standard against which all colour rendering is compared. LEDs and fiber optic lighting provide focus and sparkle.

Lighting technology is complex and is changing daily. Read consumer magazines, surf the Net and otherwise study to learn what you can about the field. Then, hire a good designer who knows how to light retail.

1. Your merchandise determines the quality and type of light you need. Jewelry needs more intense, sparkling light than power tools; books have to be uniformly lit for readability. Clothing needs lighting with a high color rendering index (CRI). CRI is like the contrast adjustment on your television, a high CRI rating makes colour more natural in appearance.
2. Your store's image determines your lighting choices. Tungsten halogen light in the mix adds a residential feeling. Differing layers of light and shadow provide drama. Bright even white light suggests efficiency to customers, causing them to purchase and leave quickly.
3. Light the back of the store brightly to attract customers. If you want customers to linger and look, light for visual acuity and brightness.
4. Proper placement of the lights is crucial. To avoid glare in jewelry stores, centre the lamp 3" back from the showcases' leading edge. To ensure fashion and home goods are the same colour at home as they are in your store, wash the wall with ceramic metal halide or fluorescent lamps with a high CRI .
5. All the light sources noted come in a variety of colour temperatures. 3000K is warm, emphasizing reds; 3500 - 4100K is neutral, rendering warm and cool colours equally well; 5500K is cool, emphasizing blue. The effect of the color temperature of the lights you choose on your merchandise and customers will make a difference between a sale and "just looking". A designer familiar with your merchandise will help you make the best choice.
6. Inside cases, LED lighting makes jewelry sparkle and shows off detail in glasses and belt buckles. The lamp life of LED's is 50,000 hours which makes it great for hard-to-relamp places. At present, downlighting with LED is not effective due to the lack of light output.
7. An illuminator (light in a box) lights the tips of fibers connected to it, hence fiber optic lighting. The tips of the fibers are small and produce no heat. The illuminator is mounted in a remote location and has a fan for cooling and easy maintenance of the lamp. These tiny points of light illuminate the facets of a diamond brilliantly or create colour-changing stars on a ceiling. Because installation requires the design of a customized fixture, this is a more expensive light source. with a lamp life that varies with the type of lamp used an an illuminator (up to 50,000 hours if LED lighting is used) and without the emission of any UV rays, it is a green solution, especially recommended for high-end watches whose leather straps may be damaged or discoloured by other light sources in the showcases. Fiber optic lighting is also great for illuminating chandeliers, gift cases and museum towers.

8. Ceramic metal halide (CMH) lamps are energy efficient and have a high CRI rating. Although initially more expensive, they last longer than tungsten halogen: 12,000 hours versus 4,000 hours. The newest bulbs are smaller, very energy efficient and have a high CRI rating.
9. One 70-watt CMH fixtures can replace four 50-watt tungsten halogen MR16 fixtures, enabling a greener solution.
10. MR16 halogen bulbs are small and inexpensive, have built-in reflectors and emit a great quality of light.
11. The number of watts used in your retail space affects the amount of power you use and the amount of air conditioning you need. The lower the overall wattage, whichever lamp type you use, the lower your power and air conditioning usage will be. Many local and state authorities are imposing energy restrictions on commercial locations. Make sure your lighting designer takes any restrictions into account so you get the lighting you need without major redesigns.
12. Be sure your light fixtures are accessible for re-lamping. Train staff to check for and change burned-out lights. Ensure that you have a supply of the specified lamps originally used and that staff understand what lamp goes where.
13. Daylight is still the mother of all light sources. Maximize the daylight in your store and consider using controls on the light fixtures closest to direct daylight. To cut glare, use film on the windows. If skylights are possible, install them in single-story buildings.

A well lit store is like a mermaid, fatally attractive to customers.