



Lighting Lessons

Award-winning lighting contractor Jim Boyd shares his thoughts on the future of the industry.

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If the name Jim Boyd seems even vaguely familiar, it stands to reason. Boyd cleaned up at the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals (AOLP) awards ceremony during the 2010 Annual Meeting & Expo.

His company, Boyd Lighting Designs, won two AOLP peer Merit Awards (Best Residential Lighting Application and Best of Show Lighting), an Award of Excellence for Best Lighting Project from AOLP's awards committee and it won the coveted Janet Lennox Moyer Award.

With more than 30 years in the landscape lighting industry – delivering both distinctive and thrilling lighting scenes for residents of San Antonio and adjacent Texas Hill Country area – it seemed the perfect time to debrief with Boyd on the state of the industry and what he sees ahead for outdoor lighting.

How'd you get into the lighting business?

Lighting goes back three generations in my family. I began learning about lighting from working in a lighting showroom business which specialized in residential lighting applications and design. When I began designing and installing landscape lighting, I was already familiar with many of the lamps used because they were the same lamps we had been using in recessed and track applications inside homes.

What are some of your biggest challenges as a lighting professional?

My biggest challenge – which I really enjoy – is to try and keep up with the continual evolution of the light bulb itself. When the term “lifelong learning” was coined, they had to be talking about the lighting industry.

You will never get bored in this business, because there is always something new, or new to you, to learn about and find ways to use to enhance your clients' experience with light.

What do outdoor contractors (irrigation, fencers, landscapers) who aren't currently lighting experts need to know – and what should they watch out for – when thinking about entering the outdoor lighting market or adding it as a service to their repertoire?

The landscape lighting business could be one of the worst opportunities for someone to attempt to fake it until you make it. A good place to start is www.aolponline.org, the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals. Many manufactures also offer opportunities for training.

I feel that before any lighting is sold, (contractors) need to educate themselves and spend the time necessary – especially at night – to become familiar with lamps and fixtures that create effects used in outdoor lighting.

This requires that the individual designing the system knows both the capabilities and limitations of each component they choose to use in the lighting system, including lamps, fixtures, connection type, system layout and the wiring technique used.

What equipment will contractors need to get started in lighting installation?

Basic electrical tools and a test meter. They have most of the equipment as a landscape contractor already.

Licensing and certification are important. Talk a little bit about what certifications you have.

In 2004, I was part of the first group to test to become a CLVLT, or certified low voltage lighting technician. This educational program is offered and administered through AOLP.

The organization offers a certified outdoor lighting designer (COLD) program, which transpires over a four- year period.

How will certification affect the industry in the future?

I believe that individuals who take the time to learn and apply best practices with regard to design and installation of landscape lighting can only help our industry, whether they become certified or are licensed.

Where do you see the industry in 10 years?

LED lighting is here to stay, but my hope is that we will have more standardization and consistency between manufacturers of solid state LED lamps. At the very minimum, I want the same offerings I have today from halogen MR16's in intensity, beam spread and color temperature to choose from.