

GUEST EDITORIAL

Meeting changing customer expectations

by Vivienne Ansell

Chairperson, Lighthouse lighting group

The retail lighting industry in New Zealand has undergone significant changes in the past ten years and will continue to face even bigger ones in the next decade. In broad terms, this industry consists of the price-based cash-and-carry stores, the mid-level retail stores, and the mid-to-high-level specialist stores.



Lighthouse lighting stores focus on the latter segment of the market; on top of this, we also provide lighting design consultancy services to customers in the decorative architectural market, such as hotels, retail stores and other commercial buildings.

Formed six years ago as a buying group with eighteen members, Lighthouse lighting group has owner operators in cities and major towns.

This has led to expanded marketing opportunities and a management structure that focuses on using the combined buying strength and shared knowledge and experience of the store members, while retaining personal ownership at storefront level to serve our customer base more effectively.



Changes in product range, knowledge and the industry compliance requirements have increased pressure on the stores. The benefits of collectively overcoming these pressures and market challenges allowed individual stores to pull through against tough economic and competitive pressure.

SUCCESS FACTOR

Consumers today expect a far greater value in lighting selection and solutions. A key success factor is our ability to offer the reliable and high standard of lighting design services and solutions that



Co-op members at the recent Lighthouse lighting group exhibition and conference

we gain to a high standard through shared learning, knowledge, experience and cooperation among members.

Thanks also to the unique supply arrangement whereby some store members directly import branded lighting products from Europe and other countries, member stores have the assurance of a continuous supply of a wide range of exclusive and quality lighting products.

In return, our importing members have a base of eighteen stores to purchase their products.

Another valuable component in our organization is our General Manager, Peter Leong, a hands-on leader with a wide range of skills in both industry and management practices.

Peter works closely with the board and members to provide a cohesive and viable organizational foundation for Lighthouse members to run a successful business with greater confidence.

THE FUTURE

Where is the lighting industry going? The rapid advance in high brightness LED lighting technology and the drive for energy saving and sustainability is creating some potential obsolescence in the lighting fixture and light source market.

Coupled with the drive to reduce, or in some cases eliminate, the recessing of lighting fixtures into domestic ceilings, this means that product mix, display and safety compliance knowledge all need serious attention. This requires continuous upskilling to understand and meet new industry requirements.

Our target customer base is moving away from cash-and-carry stores, looking for product and lighting information by searching the internet, and then visiting the store, expecting to get the value added service they seek.

This new customer can buy online worldwide, knows what they want, and expects to be able to get it. Lighthouse group is not only working on keeping up with these challenges and opportunities as a cooperative, but intends to be a leader in this new specialist retail lighting world. ●

Vivienne Ansell,
Chairperson, Lighthouse
lighting group

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New Zealand
Cooperatives
Association Inc.,
Level 3
75 Ghuznee St
Te Aro
Wellington 6011
P 04 384 4595
F 04 801 6966
nzca@nz.coop

New lighting products are coming onto the market all the time, and co-op members need to know about them



Lighthouse lighting group can be found online at www.lighthouselighting.co.nz