

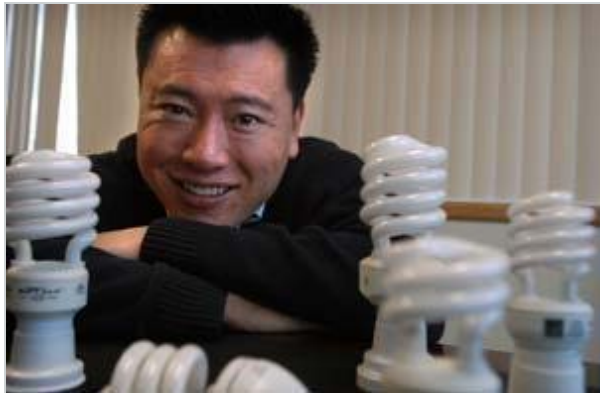


Glowing green

More affordable materials make it easier for eco-friendly businesses to shine

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Richard Ham is the president of US Lighting Tech, a Signal Hill business that sells eco-friendly light bulbs. (Diandra Jay/Staff Photographer)

These days, Wachovia Bank is in the business of being green, and we're not just talking about money.

From floor to ceiling, the bank's 20 financial centers planned for Southern California - including the newest one just built on 5625 Woodruff Ave. in Lakewood - are being outfitted with sustainable

materials.

As part of its new green initiative, the company is planning to build all its Wachovias in California to meet Leadership in Energy and Environment Design certification.

"None of those (materials) are any more expensive than what we've been putting in our financial centers all along," said Diane Priest, manager of new branch development design for Wachovia. "They look the same but we searched specifically



Wachovia's new eco-friendly facility at 5625 Woodruff Ave. in Lakewood. It is becoming easier for businesses to go green, as many environmentally friendly products and materials cost the same as other items have in the past. (Diandra Jay/Staff Photographer)

for finishes that had recycled content."

As environmental issues come to consumer purview, dozens of companies like Wachovia are striving to "green" their businesses and offer consumers more eco-friendly products.

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Kohl's recently converted some of its California stores to solar power and shoe brands like Nike are coming out with footwear made from sustainable materials.

British grocer Tesco's Fresh and Easy Neighborhood Market - which recently opened one of two locations in Lakewood and is planning to open stores in Long Beach and Compton - installed a 500,000-square-foot solar panel on the roof of its Riverside distribution center.

Fresh and Easy also offers customer recycling, reuses all its display and shipping materials, sells no Styrofoam and only offers energy-efficient light bulbs.

"There's certainly a concern about the environment that is very legitimate, that we clean up our air and clean up our act," said Matt Kinley, chairman of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, which this year doled out its first "Eco-Awards" recognizing businesses that invest locally in green technologies.

"I think businesses are more than anything else just seeing that society in general and government in particular are becoming more and more concerned about the environment," Kinley said. "If we take the lead, we'll have a better solution than what the government will come up with."

Priest said the trend to green has become more commonplace as materials have become more affordable.



Mark Moon, with US Lighting Tech in Signal Hill, assembles a 100-watt street light. The process takes only about 20 minutes, as the majority of the parts he uses are shipped to the company intact from China and Korea. (Diandra Jay/Staff Photographer)

"Being in the design and architectural world for years, I've been living and understanding green for years," she said. "Before it was considered cutting edge and that usually cost more money. Now it's easier to strive to be green."

Light bulbs

Rick Ham, whose parents began US Lighting Tech in 1992 with his father's energy efficient night light, said the company is seeing more interest from companies that want eco-friendly lighting in the last two or three years.

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"It's a low-hanging fruit for people who want to save energy or go green," said Ham, whose company's distribution center is based in Signal Hill. "Not only is society pushing them, but at the end of the day, it just makes sense. Lighting becomes better, cheaper. Bills go down. The economy is slowing down and people are looking for ways to increase their bottom lines and find the best ways to save money."

The company makes about \$5 million to \$6 million annually from its consumer and commercial lighting products, including Tesla Cobra Lighting and Tesla Daytona Tunnel Lighting.

Staff Writer Don Jergler contributed to this report.

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