

Customer Story: Tag Along Toys

Creating a better business experience through LED lighting

November 9, 2012



LEAPFROG
LIGHTING

The Tag Along Toys story

Why did Patti Taggart, owner of Tag Along Toys in Kanata, Ontario, give her entire stock of halogen bulbs to a fellow store owner after installing LED lights?

While the altruistic might view it as a kind act, and the shrewd as a calculated stratagem, the savvy business-minded see it for what it really is: an intelligent business decision.

Figure 1

Tag Along Toys - Signature Centre, Ottawa



Eleven years after starting her independently owned and operated toy store business, known for its unique and well constructed toys and games (many of which are eco-friendly and not sold in big box stores), first-rate customer service, and friendly staff, Ms. Taggart remained discontent with the halogen lighting that lit her store. The halogens consumed high levels of electricity, taxed her store's air conditioner, produced a yellowish glow over her merchandise, and negatively impacted the environment.

Figure 2

Ms. Debbie Harley, Assistant Manager of Tag Along Toys, re-stocking the shelves under the new LED lamps



Even Ms. Taggart's brother, a veteran electrician, and father, owner of Eastern Ontario construction company Taggart Construction Limited, expressed dissatisfaction with the store's halogen lighting. She needed a new lighting solution, but past attempts, which included installing non-descript "eco-friendly bulbs" proved disastrous: "The lighting was poor and the lights were burning out fast. Installing those bulbs was an expensive nightmare."

Once introduced to Leapfrog Lighting's PAR30 LED bulbs, Ms. Taggart knew she finally found the solution and no longer required her stockpile of halogens.

Ms. Taggart explains how LED lighting solved some of her biggest business challenges: operational costs (including electricity, air conditioning, and bulb stock) and store aesthetics.

Operational Costs

Energy savings is a well-known benefit of LED lighting, and for Ms. Taggart, that benefit resolved one of her business challenges: high electricity costs.

"I've been complaining about my electricity bill for years! Just ask [Assistant Manager] Debbie," Ms. Taggart says. "My brother was constantly saying my bills must be so high based on the halogen lights. Plus, I was running fans, which is an additional cost."

Why fans? In addition to the large amount of energy used by halogen lights, most of the energy meant to produce light is actually wasted as heat. As such, any space that utilizes halogens as the main light source will experience high temperatures. In Ms. Taggart's store, the air conditioner activated ten minutes after turning on the lights in the morning and remained running the rest of the day:

"WE WOULD HAVE THE A/C ON FULL BLAST, AND THE
STORE WOULD STILL READ 78-80 DEGREES [FAHR-
ENHEIT]. AS SOON AS WE PUT THE LED LIGHTS IN, IT
WOULD BE BETWEEN 68-72 DEGREES [FAHRENHEIT],
WHICH IS WHAT WE WANTED IN THE STORE."

Assistant Manager Debbie Harley, who is often on the floor helping customers all day, concurs. "Oh," she exasperates. "It used to get so hot in here. The LEDs have really made a difference. It's quite noticeable, actually. You would never feel the air conditioner before."

The long lifetime and robust nature of LEDs also provided a cost savings. Ms. Taggart calculates that, each month, she was spending between \$180-200 purchasing halogen lamps:

“DO THE MATH, AND THAT’S ABOUT \$2400 A YEAR! THAT’S AROUND HOW MUCH I SPENT ON THE STORE FOR LED BULBS...AND THAT’S JUST A ONE-TIME PAYMENT! AT LEAST 6 HALOGENS WOULD GO OUT EVERY MONTH. I CAN’T EVEN TELL YOU HOW MANY LIGHT BULBS I’VE BOUGHT OVER THE YEARS. I ALWAYS HAD TO KEEP BULBS IN STOCK, SO I WAS SPENDING A LOT OF MONEY.”

Once Ms. Taggart installed the LEDs, her electricity consumption and operational costs reduced considerably:

“AFTER ONE YEAR, I’LL HAVE SEEN MY RETURN ON INVESTMENT, AND THEN THE \$2400 I WAS SPENDING IN LIGHTING COSTS, PLUS THE MONEY I’LL BE SAVING ON MY BILLS, WILL GIVE ME EXTRA MONEY TO PUT INTO THE STORE. MONEY SAVED GOES INTO INVENTORY AND NEW TOYS, REPLACING CARPETS OR SLATWALL—LOTS OF STUFF THAT I’VE BEEN WANTING TO DO, BUT EXTRA MONEY IS PRETTY RARE. WITH THE SAVINGS ON LAMPS AND ELECTRICITY, I CAN DO A FEW MORE THINGS.”

Aesthetics

“Employees have really noticed the difference,” says Ms. Harley, as she recounts the first time a part time worker came into the store after they installed the PAR30s:

“I STOOD WATCHING HER AS SHE WAS LOOKING AROUND THE STORE, VERY CONFUSED, TRYING TO PINPOINT WHAT WAS DIFFERENT. SHE IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED A CHANGE, BUT COULDN’T FIGURE IT OUT. WHEN I STOPPED LAUGHING AND FINALLY TOLD HER, SHE SAID SHE WAS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING ‘BIGGER’. SHE DIDN’T REALIZE THAT IT WAS JUST A CHANGE IN BULBS BECAUSE THE RESULTS WERE SO SIGNIFICANT.”

After installing the LEDs, Ms. Harley observed how much better the merchandise displayed on the shelves. No longer a “dull yellow, the toys, the boxes...everything just looks more vibrant and clean.” Ms. Taggart adds: “The whole store just has a nice, calming effect. The toys look white and clean looking now. The packages pop more; they just look more colorful because they are not as yellowy looking.”

Figure 3

Toys and games under Leapfrog Lighting PAR30 LEDs



Ms. Taggart also indicates that burnt out bulbs in a retail establishment, while seemingly minor, is perceived quite negatively by customers. She indicates that while it can imply any number of things, none are positive. “I don’t like having light bulbs out, as it looks bad. It can even look like you can’t afford your bills, and that doesn’t help your business.” Since the lights at the front of Tag Along Toys stay on all the time, they are often the first to die. Ms. Taggart, not wanting to turn customers off her business, always tries to change the bulbs right away. But with halogens that’s not an easy endeavor: “I’d have to wait to change it with halogen because it was too hot to touch.”

Other benefits Ms. Taggart notes as a result of using LEDs include:

- **Increased productivity:** “We haven’t even had the ladder out to change a bulb! With the halogens, we would have six go out at same time every month or so.”
- **Competitive advantage:** “We’re more eco-friendly and customers like that. A lot of stores have not done that. They either have halogens or fluorescents. I really notice the lighting in other stores now...you walk in and the lights are really bright and hot and have a yellowy glow.”
- **Increased safety:** “Especially this time of year when it’s getting busier and the store has even more stock than usual, there are absolutely concerns over safety. One time, one of the halogens popped and broke. It was actually really kind of scary. Luckily no one was in the store, but you wouldn’t want to have anyone, let alone a child, get burnt or injured by a light bulb in your store. Also, some of our toys have plastic around the outside of the box and I would sometimes get up on the ladder to adjust the lights so it wasn’t always on those boxes. I’d worry about it burning up.”

Even though Ms. Taggart’s decision to adopt a new technology—and unequivocally reject another—seems rash on the surface, she spent a lot of time getting educated about LED technology and analyzing the financial impact.

Introduced to Leapfrog Lighting by Ms. Harley, who for years has been a first-hand witness to Ms. Taggart’s struggle over high electricity bills, Ms. Taggart reached out for information. Leapfrog Lighting explained the fundamentals of LED technology to Ms. Taggart and provided a proposal.

“LEAPFROG WAS UP FRONT ABOUT THE INITIAL COST, WHICH THEY SAID WOULD BE MORE MONEY DOWN THAN THE LAMPS I WAS BUYING TODAY, BUT ENSURED ME I WOULD SEE A RETURN ON THAT INVESTMENT VERY QUICKLY, BASED ON MY USAGE.”

Using the full resources at her disposal, Ms. Taggart took the proposal to her electrician brother to examine:

“HE KNOWS PRODUCTS AND PRICES. HE LOOKED AT IT AND SAID, ‘THIS IS A GOOD DEAL. I THINK YOU SHOULD DO IT.’ HE LOOKED AT ALL THE SPECS AND WAS IMPRESSED. I DIDN’T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT LED LIGHTS, OR SPECS, OR WHAT MAKES ONE LAMP



BETTER THAN THE OTHER. LEAPFROG LIGHTING EDUCATED ME, MY BROTHER-IN-LAW EDUCATED ME. I DEFINITELY DID DUE DILIGENCE PRIOR TO PURCHASING."



Leapfrog Lighting's PAR30 LED lamp provides industry-leading output power and efficacy thanks to high-efficiency, high-reliability LED source and driver electronics. The lamp's innovative lens design creates a pleasing, glare-free light suitable for use in all indoor and unexposed outdoor down-lighting applications. The lamp also delivers the high CRI and ultra-consistent color temperature control critical to multi-lamp applications in hotels, restaurants, schools, office buildings, casinos, retail operations and other public spaces. With a life expectancy of 40,000 operating hours, this UL-registered lamp will provide more than 27 years of service at 4 hours per day.

With that, Ms. Taggart considered whether she wanted to put the expense out at that time and decided it was worth it. But still wary after her past experience with other "eco-friendly" bulbs, Ms. Taggart was understandably cautious: "I was very resistant at first. So I just started with the track lighting around the walls of store. I wanted to see the results first before spending more money."

After the Christmas season, which is always a good time of year for Tag Along Toys, Ms. Taggart plans on expanding the installation of LED lamps. "I'm very pleased with the results and I would absolutely recommend LEDs to any other business looking to solve the same sort of issues I experienced. And Leapfrog. Leapfrog Lighting was open with everything and answered every question I had. The return on investment, projections...everything was laid out. In January, I fully intend to buy more."



About Tag Along Toys

Tag Along Toys, an Ottawa-West toy store, sells unique toys and games that are developmentally appropriate for children of all ages. Friendly and knowledgeable staff, competitive pricing, and 20% discounts on “Grandparent’s Day” (last Thursday of every month) ensures you can find the perfect gift at the right price.

You can contact Tag Along Toys through the following channels:

Tag Along Toys (Signature Centre)

499 Terry Fox Dr

Kanata, Ontario, Canada K2T 1H7

T: 613-270-TOYS (8697)

F: 613-270-8699

Internet: www.tagalongtoys.ca

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/tagalongtoys>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/Tagalongtoys>

About Leapfrog Lighting

Leapfrog Lighting, an Ottawa-based LED lighting supplier, sells the best in commercial and industrial LED lighting at the lowest cost of ownership. Each and every bulb sold is subjected to one of the industry’s toughest testing regimes to ensure it performs the way you expect them to.

You can contact Leapfrog Lighting through the following channels:

Leapfrog Lighting

400 March Road

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2K 3H4

T: 613-270-7879

Internet: www.leapfroglighting.com

Email: info@leapfroglighting.com

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LeapfrogL>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/LeapfrogL>

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/leapfrog-lighting>

Google+: <http://gplus.to/LeapfrogLighting>