

cautious about conveying any of your anger or frustration to a potential employer or executive search firm. These people are being inundated with voicemails and e-mails. There's an old saying that people don't remember a lot of conversations or interactions, but if the person with whom they dealt was rude or sarcastic, *that* tends to be something they won't forget. Don't be that person.

### THIS TOO SHALL PASS

The lighting, LED and electrical job market *will* improve, and we will at one point return to a candidate's market. In the meantime, we'd highly recommend that being flexible, stepping back to look at the bigger picture and realizing that for the time being the paradigm has shifted can go a long way towards moving you back into the "employed" column before too long.



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**W**e all know that age-defying products abound, from toothpaste to vitamins. They all sell "hope" of delaying or reversing the normal age-related changes that our bodies go through. But not everything on this list comes out of a tube or bottle. One of the best ways to effectively combat normal changes to vision and maximize independence as we age is simply quality lighting. People in their early 40's actually begin to compensate for these changes with over-the-counter magnifying eyeglasses, commonly called "cheaters." But as the aging process continues, what began as not being able to read the phone book or the menu in a dimly lit restaurant becomes more serious, prompting the need for higher light levels and a way to adjust to an increased sensitivity to glare. And these needs must be addressed where we live.

Boomers and today's seniors are opting to remain active within their community, rather than move to retirement centers. A survey by AARP reported that 84 percent of people 50 and over prefer to age-in-place. This desire places new emphasis on incorporating universal design elements, including

lighting, into residential renovation and new construction projects.

The emphasis on green design sweeping the nation could be both good and bad for appropriate lighting for aging adults. Energy code restrictions do not apply to most residential projects, but to safeguard lighting options in the future, the next edition of the *Lighting Handbook* from the IES should quantify the light levels needed by people as they age, recognizing that older people require higher lighting levels, rather than the current "one level fits all ages" approach. There is also a need to educate the general public about the lighting needs of those 50 and older. Young people may deem older people wasteful for using more light or higher light levels if they do not understand that the needs of their parents or grandparents differ from their own.

The increased use of daylight within the home not only qualifies as a green strategy because of reduced energy use, but also provides the higher light levels for vision and the wavelength of light required to maintain healthy circadian rhythms. A higher percentage of older people than younger people also suffer the consequences of circadian disturbances, with sleep disruption being the most easily observed symptom. Studies indicate that over 70 percent of older adults experience sleep problems, due in part to mobility conditions that keep them indoors.

**Not everything that combats normal age-related changes to our bodies comes out of a tube or bottle. One of the best ways to ward off changes to vision is simply quality lighting**

### **DIRECT/INDIRECT APPROACH**

Using the direct/indirect approach typically applied to office lighting will also provide uniform ambient light that is appreciated by older eyes. As we age, our eyes adapt much more slowly to changes in light level. Obviously the direct/indirect lighting solution for a residence will not look the same as for an office. Creative lighting designers or fixture manufacturers have an opportunity to reach a new market segment which promises to grow as the Boomers become older.

The emotional response to high-contrast lighting that is attractive to young people can create fear and anxiety for older people and may contribute to falls and fractures. It is my hope that the direct/indirect approach to providing ambient light will replace recessed downlights commonly found in residential settings. Providing layers of light to accommodate the variety of activities that take place within the home will enhance the independence of the resident(s).

After ambient light, the next step is to identify all areas of the home where visual tasks are performed that require additional task lighting, i.e., grooming, doing laundry, cooking, paying bills, reading the newspaper, books or medication bottles and enjoying hobbies. Once these basic needs have been satisfied, a layer of accent lighting and glow can be added.

That's not all. Because of what we know about the impact of light on our health, another issue that must be addressed is lighting at night that will not disrupt our body clock. This is particularly true for bedrooms and bathrooms, but if the resident(s) experiences sleep problems, more of the home may be impacted, i.e., the light inside the refrigerator. The brighter cool light that is appropriate during the day is not appropriate for evening or in the middle of the night when low light levels, warm in color, are needed. Nightlights that are red or amber will not disrupt the body clock or alter the dark-adapted vision when getting up in the night to use the bathroom. Using value contrast between objects and their background aids seeing under low light conditions.

### **IES MEETS AARP**

The IES is in the process of approving its first General Interest Memorandum, *Lighting Your Way to Better Vision*, which will be distributed at no cost to the general public via the website and links to other organizations. This document covers in greater detail the issues identified above with photographs to demonstrate possible solutions. The IES Lighting for Aging and Partially Sighted Committee will represent the Society at the AARP Conference in September this year to promote the publication and to build name recognition of the IES. As we build greater understanding among the general population, we must also place new emphasis on incorporating universal lighting design elements supportive of aging-in-place into residential renovation and new construction projects.



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