



Terry Clark

interview by Elizabeth Donoff
portrait by Jeff Singer

“Manufacturers have a responsibility to avoid some of the lessons we learned a long time ago. There are glare bombs being built and offered today—that’s just shocking. I don’t understand the dynamics of an LED company to make that kind of choice. We are shooting ourselves in the foot, returning to painfully bright luminaires. That’s where a savvy design community has to step in, reject them and say that’s not acceptable.”

With business degree in hand, Terry Clark was on his way to a career in the high-tech industry, but then a management recruiter approached him and asked him to take a look at the lighting industry. That was 20 years ago, and the rest, as they say, is history. In that time Clark has built a company—Finelite—and put his stamp on solving glare in the workplace. Creating affordably priced, quality luminaires that provide glare-free illumination has been the company’s central mission. In the constant strive to build a better luminaire, Clark sees every potential obstacle as an opportunity for new knowledge and growth. “Lighting,” he says, is “a wonderful place to be right now.”

What do you find fascinating about lighting?

In one word: collaboration. Lighting is a tremendously people-oriented business.

What makes a great luminaire?

When you are able to understand the users’ needs and provide a luminaire that can deliver.

How has business changed the past 20 years?

Like all businesses, we’ve had a tremendous compression with respect to the time we have to make intelligent responses to the market’s needs. We have to do more with less, and we’ve got to do it faster.

Where is the business of lighting heading?

Lighting is an extremely segmented and fractionalized industry. The thrust of solid-state lighting, of more intelligent sensors and controls, is actually accelerating the segmentation. This is a golden age for division managers and entrepreneurs to identify a segment and do it extremely well.

What do you find exciting about the current integration of LEDs into lighting?

The type of LEDs Finelite has chosen for our application is the mid-power LED that is the workhorse of the TV and display industry. The TV industry isn’t meeting its sales projections. That means there are millions of mid-power LEDs that have to be sold. As a result, we have seen price drops that I did not expect to see until late 2012, early 2013. The upside for us is that it lets us bring out state-of-the-art products more quickly.

How can good faith be maintained in SSL?

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