

Postings: from the desk of Jim Brodrick

We hear a lot in the news media about how the U.S. is losing jobs to other countries, in the face of the harsh realities of the global economy. Some of you may have seen a *Washington Post* article about the closing this month of GE's last major U.S. plant making standard incandescent bulbs. Those bulbs will be phased out by EISA in favor of more efficient bulbs, which the article noted are more economically manufactured in Asia.

So the gloom and doom is real enough, but it's not the whole story – not by a long shot. There's another side to the coin, and it's a side we don't often hear about. I thought I'd address the topic through a new series of occasional *Postings* that profile solid-state lighting companies that are making a difference by growing or establishing a manufacturing presence here in the U.S. I'm calling the series "SSL in America."

Solid-state lighting is especially fertile ground for reestablishing U.S. manufacturing leadership – not only because it's a revolutionary technology born from U.S. ingenuity and R&D, but because it's riding the crest of a worldwide regulatory trend toward greater energy efficiency. The closing of the GE plant marks the end of an era, but it's also the beginning of a new era – one in which lighting will be much more energy-efficient than Edison ever imagined, and U.S. manufacturing can play a significant role.

For the past eight years, DOE has worked to accelerate the growth of the SSL industry through a combination of R&D, demonstrations, and other efforts, such as the L Prize program.

This has led to many technological and market advancements that have helped strengthen U.S. industry and give it a lead in producing quality products. But we won't be able to maintain this lead if a substantial portion of our manufacturing ends up being outsourced overseas. That's why DOE added a manufacturing R&D component last year, the goal being to improve U.S. manufacturing efficiency and curb the drain of technological expertise, intellectual property, and manufacturing jobs to other countries.

These very challenges were addressed this April by several plenary speakers and a special panel at DOE's second annual SSL Manufacturing R&D Workshop in San Jose, CA. While it was noted that the global nature of the industry will inevitably result in the loss of some technology and manufacturing from the U.S., there were a number of specific actions suggested to help the country maintain a strong SSL presence – a task that Jim Anderson of Philips Color Kinetics likened to "putting a man on the moon," in terms of importance, magnitude, and achievability.

Those suggestions are highlighted in a recently published [DOE white paper](#) available online. They range from increasing basic and applied research aimed at reducing chip production costs, to providing government incentives to defray the capital cost of SSL manufacturing, to establishing standards for product specifications and compliance, to building up a domestic supply industry. The paper also reports the overall findings of the workshop, outlines the current state of the SSL industry, and highlights the importance of continued government/private sector collaboration in retaining U.S. manufacturing strength.

The "SSL in America" *Postings* will focus on those companies that are already demonstrating that the goals outlined in the white paper can be achieved. Each one of these companies has stepped up to the plate and made a commitment to carry out a

significant portion of their SSL manufacturing in the U.S. – thereby creating jobs while at the same time strengthening the country's leadership and advancing the technology. They range from small startups that made good, to large operations that embraced solid-state lighting, to various shades of in-between. All of them produce quality products – and all of them are innovators that are constantly improving those products instead of standing pat.

There's still no shortage of other solid-state lighting issues that need to be addressed in these *Postings*, so don't expect to see an "SSL in America" profile every week. But the profiles are essentially success stories, and I hope you find them informative as well as inspiring. In any case, I think they're important stories to tell, and you'll be seeing the first one very soon.

As always, if you have questions or comments, you can reach me at postings@lightingfacts.com.

James R. Brodrick
