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**Todd Goers**  
Director of Sales,  
Landscape Lighting  
at WAC Group



## Significant technology innovations advance landscape industry's growth and prosperity

Dear Readers:

**THE LANDSCAPE LIGHTING INDUSTRY** continues to grow and prosper. Significant advancements are centered around the latest technology. Many manufacturers are looking for creative ways to develop new products that are both user-friendly and offer flexibility in their application use. Versatile products that can be used in a multitude of job site areas are giving landscape lighting designers and installers greater flexibility in scene creation.

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Our diverse portfolio offers cutting-edge technologies, stylish designs, and sustainable solutions that enhance and illuminate spaces. With over 40 years of expertise, the WAC Group serves homeowners, architects, designers, builders, and other landscape lighting professionals by providing easy-to-install, intuitive products that simplify and elevate everyday life. From custom lighting designs to advanced smart systems, the WAC Group is dedicated to bringing "Technology Illuminated" to life for all. For more information, visit [waclighting.com](http://waclighting.com).

Regards,  
Todd Goers  
Director of Sales, Landscape Lighting at WAC Group

**"Our diverse portfolio offers cutting-edge technologies, stylish designs, and sustainable solutions that enhance and illuminate spaces."**



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# Not so neglected anymore

The technology surrounding landscape lighting is increasing — as is its demand among customers. **By Kim Lux**

Landscape lighting is often seen as the finishing touches on any design/build or hardscaping project. And contractors from across the country are saying that there are dozens more options readily available for customers now than there were even a few years ago. This is in terms of not only the light bulbs themselves, but the fixtures and systems as a whole. Customers can now change their entire lighting ambience with a few taps on their phone as opposed to a flick of a switch.

But even despite all these advancements — there are still some common challenges when it comes to selling the service effectively, and potentially even more on the horizon.

**TRENDING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.** “Years ago, it was just path lights and spotlights that everyone was looking for,” says Bill Rolstad, account manager for Broderick’s Landscape Contracting in Lancaster County, Pa. “Now, they’re going more for under-cap lights and lighting underneath countertops and rope lighting. That’s what they’re asking for the most.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF ETCH OUTDOOR LIVING

Sam Rankin, president of ETCH Outdoor Living in Ankeny, Iowa, agrees — adding that more and more customers are seeking out impressive lighting displays. “Generally, I think we’re just seeing more,” he says. “Before it was kind of a luxury and very tertiary thought. It wasn’t a typical part of a job — it was added as an afterthought. Now, we’re seeing that it’s included in the scope of the project from the beginning. It’s something we talk about far more often.”

In the past, Rankin notes that any lighting job the company was called in to do were more for security and home protection than anything else. “The other thing we’re really seeing is using it to accent features,” he says. “Before it was thought of more as a safety feature — where you have exterior lighting so more people can see around your home or see if someone shouldn’t be there. But now, we’re seeing it much more from a decorative perspective and far less from a simple safety perspective.”

Down in Dallas, Texas, Luke Stokes, president of Allstate Landscape is seeing the exact same thing. “People who put in new pools and custom homes — those are who we find generally want the landscape lighting,” he adds. “They just spent all that money on a pretty new pool, and they want to be able to use it at night with the ambience that landscape lighting creates around a pool is really special. It makes the outdoor experience really, really nice.”

While Stokes admits that landscape lighting doesn’t make up too much of the company’s \$4 million in revenue, he notes that Dallas is currently going through a “big home building boom” that he’s taking full advantage of. And more homes mean more install and lighting projects.

However, Stokes says his clientele isn’t ponying up for fancy, multi-colored and super advanced lighting choices but instead opting for simple spotlights. “For us, people aren’t paying for the really high-end stuff,” he says. “I’m sure they are somewhere — but we’re just noticing that no one really cares to see the light fixture. They just care about the light. Nobody has been getting the special copper, brass or chrome things. It’s more about the bulb.”

**TECHNOLOGY IS BURNING BRIGHTER.** But Rankin’s experience differs from Stokes, and he says the advancements in landscape lighting technology are leading to more work. “It’s been incredible with all the new players in the market,” he says. “Before you had two or three big players and those were your only options. You had like 10 to 12 different fixtures to choose from and that was about it.”

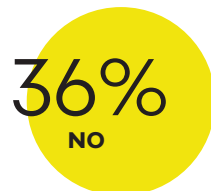
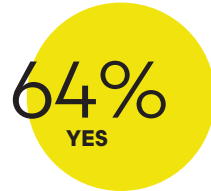
Rolstad echoes his sentiments and says the lighting manufacturers have really stepped up their game in terms of variety. “I’ve noticed the lighting companies are now into all kinds of things,” he says. “They have everything imaginable. It was a little shocking, I didn’t realize it’s come that far since I started.”

Rolstad says Broderick’s is now selling a “super high-end system” that is fully programmable to a customer’s phone and allows them to select nearly 30,000 different colors. “The neat thing is you can group lights now,” Rolstad says. “You can group by every other light and make one group green and one red as a theme for Christmas starting on Dec. 1 all the way through the 31st. You can program all that up to three years in advance.

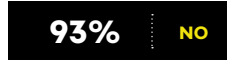
Tony Hurley, owner and founder of Artistic Landscapes in Rowley, Mass., uses the same system and says customers are clamoring after it. “Clients love how easy it is to modify the lights and impact that the lights have on their lives,” he says.

Hurley says Artistic Landscapes goes the extra miles and will pre-program a

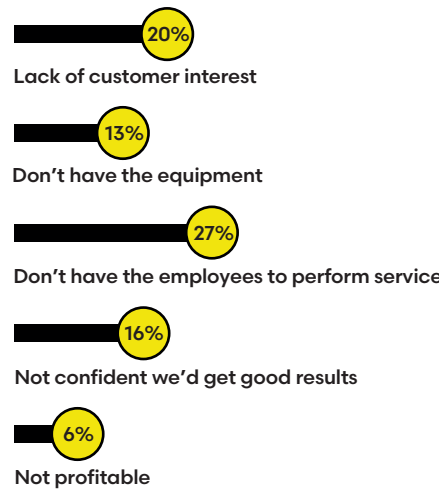
Do you currently offer landscape lighting services?



In the past three years, have you provided landscape lighting services and then stopped providing them?



If you don’t provide landscape lighting, what is stopping you from adding it? (select all that apply)





customer’s lights for all the holidays. So, they don’t have to do anything but sit back and enjoy the show.

“We pre-program the transformers so that the client will have a special lighting effect for Valentine’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Fourth of July and other holidays that they celebrate,” he says.

“This results in clients sending us pictures of their beautiful yard during each of these special times and holidays. I appreciate the effort from our clients to personally reach out to us and say thank you and how surprised they were when they came home and saw the new lighting effect and how special they feel. It is rewarding to get that feedback from so many of our clients.”

As new homeowners enter the market, Rolstad says the appeal to control everything from their phone is greater — and the advancements in the lights help appease them.

“These young kids are all into their phones and home automation,” he says. “These systems are fitting right in for them. Of course, they aren’t cheap — but the technology is there.”

Rankin adds that the newly developed lights make it even easier to get technicians and crew members up to speed on

installing them.

“The technology is advanced in the bulb and in the lens itself but also even in the connections and how it’s simplifying our training process to make installation easier,” he says. “It’s a huge gamechanger for our team — especially for our production managers on how they train new hires. You don’t need electrician-level experience anymore. It’s pretty simple.”

**SHINING A LIGHT ON SOME STRUGGLES.** On the flip side, Rolstad says all the new technology has posed a few challenges for him and his customers who aren’t as tech savvy.

“Because it’s so new and cutting-edge, it takes a while for the installers to learn,” he says. “We had one guy who went to the training class twice. Just so we could make sure he learned the whole process. It blows my mind how advanced it is.”

And Rolstad notes that previous generations of homeowners may be less inclined to make the switch and upgrade their landscape lighting. He suspects they won’t take full advantage of it.

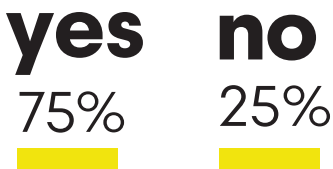
“You’re also going to have challenges with the homeowner because they aren’t used to it,” Rolstad says. “Some older folks will probably set it once and be done. They’re less likely to be playing with their phone all the time. The younger generations are used to all that automation.”

Stokes says his biggest challenges with landscape lighting are still on the horizon. Given an uncertain economy, and plenty of unknowns regarding tariffs — he predicts prices could increase dramatically causing a dip in sales.

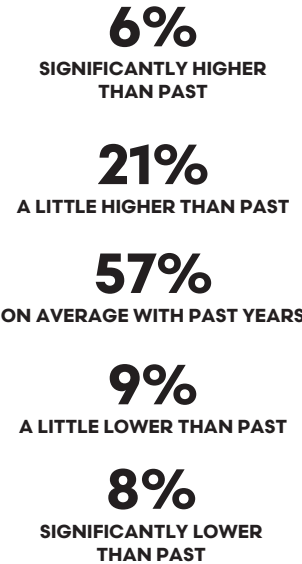
“I have no idea what’s going to happen,” he says. “Being on the design/build side I’ve had a contingency plan...to try and stay ahead of the tariffs — but it’s been so wishy-washy. I’m still ready to pull the trigger on a big order if I see something negative coming.

Despite the unknowns over what’s to come, Stokes says he’s had trouble finding available inventory from his

Do your landscape lighting customers also purchase other services from you?



How do you expect this year’s landscape lighting work to compare with year’s past?



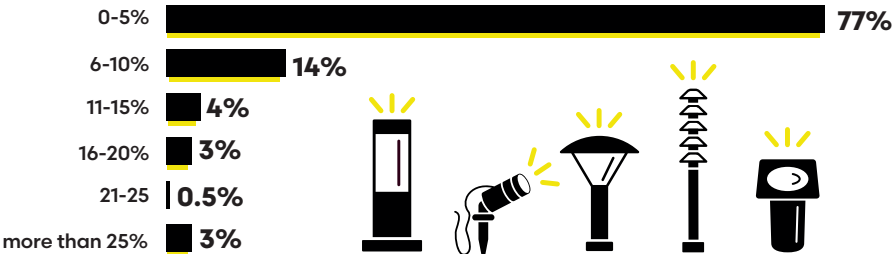
suppliers recently.

“I’ve noticed there hasn’t been a good inventory,” he says. “I wonder if that is vendor oriented, but we don’t just order it and it shows up the next day — sometimes we have to wait a week or so, which is surprising. We’re just usually used to the warehouse stocking everything. I don’t know if demand has been so high they can’t keep it in stock or what.”

With the aforementioned spike in homebuilding, Stokes says another challenge when it comes to lighting is that it’s often seen as the first thing to go to cut costs.

“In the homebuilding world, the landscape is always at the very end — so, if the budget has been blown anywhere else the landscape tends to suffer,” he says. “More

What percentage of your revenue comes from landscape lighting control services?



than 50% of the time, we’re having to redo the estimates. We may have locked it in six months ago, but they wanted marble instead of granite (in the kitchen)... the next thing you know they’re taking another \$30,000 off the install price and lighting would most likely be one of the first things to go.”

Rankin agrees, adding that the economy plays a pivotal role in lighting work and design/build in general.

“The macroeconomic environment plays a significant role in luxury, or discretionary, services such as design/build and lighting,” he says. “People don’t have to maintain lighting systems the same way they do turf or other shrubs. It’s being looked at differently. Lighting is going to continue to be a luxury — it’s never going to be a necessity.”

**SELLING MORE THAN JUST LUMENS.** And while it may not be a necessity, Rankin says getting customers to sign on is all in the sales approach.

“The old adage, ‘Don’t sell the tree, sell the shade’ comes into play,” he says. “Don’t sell the fixtures, sell the ambience of it. You’ve got to tailor your message just a little bit. People can make memories on a patio with or without lighting. We’ve got to re-focus and make sure we’re selling the right benefits of lighting and not just the feature.”

Hurley says he finds customers typically pass over lighting when they’re first discussing their project — but it takes some keen negotiation to get them on board.

“I have found most clients say, ‘I do not need color changing lights as regular white lights are fine for us.’ I point out that they don’t need any lights but once they have the lights then they will never go back to a dark landscape that they cannot see at night,” he adds.

Rolstad adds that with all the new advancements and systems, he feels landscape lighting work will be up in 2025 for his company.

“In the past, we only did it if somebody asked for



it... we’re starting to do more and more and I’m trying to sell it. We’ve already got some stuff sold this year which is more than we did last year,” he says.

And as the weather starts to warm up, Rankin says it’s even easier to sell the service as everyone wants to spend as much time enjoying the outdoors as possible.

“People are getting back outside in May and they’re closing up shop in late September. Those are our hot times to be installing and selling lighting.

“We design and sell all year around, so we’re still selling lighting, but we don’t seem to get as many calls about it when people aren’t spending time in their backyards,” he says.

Overall, Rankin says he’s fairly optimistic for the year ahead and feels landscape lighting is an integral part of the design process.

“It’s a great part of our business and I think it really can be one of the most lucrative parts if you really think about it and think through what you’re doing instead of just installing lights,” he says. “If you look at it as a profit center, it can produce a lot of margins.” **L&L**

The author is senior editor at Lawn & Landscape magazine

What is your company’s revenue?

19%

Less than \$200,000

9%

\$200,000 to \$499,000

6%

\$500,000 to \$749,000

10%

\$750,000 to \$999,000

27%

\$1 million to \$3.9 million

12%

\$4 million to \$6.9 million

4%

\$7-9.9 million or more

12%

More than \$10 million







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