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Section: BUSINESS

Page: D2

Lighting firm adds 'voltage' with marketing redo

Tiana Velez, ARIZONA DAILY STAR

SMALL BUSINESS MAKEOVER / A local business counselor offers advice

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Each Monday, a local small business gets advice from a local business consultant. Today, we look back on one business to see if the advice is paying off.

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The update

David Rishor's business is one of a few in an emerging national industry, and he has the proof in his office.

Laying open on a table is an article in the June 2005 issue of Electrical Contractor magazine with the headline, "Illuminating a New Field: Electrical Contractors as Interior Designers."

The story is a near-perfect description of the work Rishor and wife, Kelly, have been doing in Tucson for the past four years.

In 2001, the Rishors started **Light Composers Inc.**, a lighting design and installation company. The crux of the work is in the design of highly sophisticated, user-friendly lighting systems, primarily for residential use.

Rishor, an electrician with more than 25 years experience, also has designed complete systems for property managers and for a residential community in Oro Valley.

Rishor renders the designs in clean, architectural precision to show the exact location and wiring of each **light** fixture, down to the number of bulbs each would require.

Kelly handles most of the administrative and marketing functions and also does double duty as the business' Web designer because of her technical background with computers.

Among their proudest accomplishments of the past year is the move of **Light Composers** from their home office into a new design studio at 268 E. River Road. On Friday, in conjunction with the Northern Pima County Chamber of Commerce, they'll celebrate the new office with a grand opening ceremony at 10 a.m.

"The movement's been very fast," Rishor said. "Linda's advice was very much taken to heart. I want to believe we hit the mark."

Last November, the Rishors were featured in Small Business Makeover, seeking advice on how to cultivate more client relationships. They needed cost-effective marketing methods that would meet their simple budget but not look cheap.

Consultant Linda Welter Cohen worked with them, first suggesting a redesign of **Light Composers'** corporate image starting with the logo.

"After our consultation last November, we realized we had a fair amount of work to do on our image," Rishor said.

If necessary, Welter Cohen said, they could limit themselves to using only a couple colors - preferably blue and yellow, which suggest the concept of **light** - to lessen printing costs. The next step was to create a brochure that would appeal to both corporate clients and homeowners.

While Welter Cohen advised them to hire a professional graphic designer for both the logo and brochure work, the Rishors took a slightly different approach.

One evening after a bout of inspiration, Kelly designed the current logo using her computer's basic Word graphics tools. They also changed the company tagline from "expert lighting professionals," to "progressive lighting specialists."

The Rishors then hired Pedro Lopez of AD Craft Image Marketing Inc. in Tucson to design new marketing materials, including business cards and a brochure.

Welter Cohen also recommended that they improve the look of the Web site, citing the need for improved organization, fewer words and more high-quality photographs illustrating the company's services. This is where Kelly's computer skills came in handy.

They scrapped the old site and started over from scratch, using an online template. Daughter Katrina, who has some knowledge of HTML, the coding language used in Web design, also helped.

After three months, the new LightCompose.com has a more simplified, clean look. In addition to a more detailed description of the business, the site includes a gallery of professionally shot photographs of their work broken down into categories such as exterior lighting and lighting control.

"We're still trying to gear our advertising to the professionals, the architects, designers. It's just a matter of targeting the right customers," Rishor said.

With that specialization in mind, they've decided to use digital media kits and a presentation tailored to the individual needs and interests of each industry.

"Our marketing budget has quadrupled over the past year. That's where we put our extra money."

Kelly said.

They're still finding some concepts of lighting design difficult to explain.

"People don't realize that it can be less than \$2,000 to upgrade even an existing home to one-button lighting scene control. It's such a great way to improve energy efficiency, and increase security but it still takes a demonstration at times to really explain the overall concepts," she added.

"However, that is exactly why we felt we needed to open our design studio to help customers understand better means of living through lighting."

In addition to the new look, new office and new Web site, the Rishors hired a full-time apprentice, purchased another truck and plan to hire more employees for the fall season.

"We are proud to say that all of our growth has been accomplished by company income alone,"

Rishor said, adding they haven't yet had a need for a commercial business loan. With Welter Cohen's input, "we were able to exceed even our own expectations."

Word-of-mouth buzz helped the Rishors secure a contract with an affluent homeowner to redo some of the lighting in her home.

A photo of the finished home is now featured prominently in the advertising for **Light Composers**, and it later appeared in an issue of Tucson Lifestyle Home & Garden magazine for a section on lighting.

"We were met with a challenge to add voltage to our business through marketing, and we did just that," Rishor said.

The couple's next goal - go national with a franchising concept.

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Profile

* The business: **Light Composers** Inc., 268 E. River Road, Suite 100, 797-0070.

* The services: Interior and exterior lighting design and installation.

* The owners: David and Kelly Rishor.

* The consultant: Linda Welter Cohen, The Caliber Group Inc., 795-4500.

* The date: Nov. 1, 2004.

* The challenge: Attract corporate clients and redesign business without losing upscale image.

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We can help

Are you a small-business owner facing a challenge?

If so, the Star's Business section has an offer for you: Get some quality advice free by participating in "Small Business Makeover."

Each Monday, the Star matches a small business with an experienced business counselor who will discuss current challenges and suggest a course of action.

Volunteer entrepreneurs must agree to talk frankly about their business issues with assigned counselors and not mind going public with that information. In return, the adviser will develop a specific plan to address challenges and help small businesses move to the next level. The counselors are experienced, professional advice-givers gathered from Tucson's rich community of nonprofit and for-profit business counselors.

If you would like to be the subject of an upcoming makeover, contact Tiana **Velez** at 434-4083 or tvelez@azstarnet.com.