

## Tina Velez: Light Composers can add voltage to its business



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**Jim Davis / Arizona Daily Star**

David Rishor and Carol Bruyere of Carol Bruyere Interiors install a lighting system at the North Side home of one of Bruyere's clients.

**Tina Velez**  
*ARIZONA DAILY STAR*

David and Kelly Rishor are a husband-and-wife team who have managed their own lighting design firm, Light Composers Inc., since 2001. Business has been steady, and they've even landed a few upscale accounts, including the Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa. However, to attain their goals, they need to increase their sales - something they hope to achieve by attracting more corporate and industry clients.

### **The story**

Having been an electrician for 25 years, David Rishor knew a little something about lighting, and in 2001 he made the leap from journeyman to business owner and started Light Composers Inc.

The business was the answer to what David saw as a need in the local design industry for a specialist in lighting.

But he questioned whether it was possible, or even efficient, for interior designers and architects to remain current on all the new lighting techniques coming to market, said his wife, Kelly, who handles the administrative and marketing duties for the company.

Equally frustrating are the ever-changing lighting standards, which can complicate a design's implementation.

"Designers don't do the electrical," she said, adding that while designers may be able to do lighting from a conceptual standpoint, problems frequently arise when it's time to make that vision reality.

When working on a project, David first assesses the property, then makes design

recommendations based on the client's lighting goal - whether it be better energy efficiency, more security or improved ambience.

One such project included installing a lighting system that allowed the homeowner to instantly turn on a combination of lights around the house - inside and out - all with the touch of a button from a hand-held remote.

Those types of projects reflect the large part of the Rishors' business.

"Currently, 70 to 80 percent of sales are in the design and installation category," Kelly said.

Many of their initial customers were referrals from David's previous work as an electrician, while others were the result of word of mouth.

Eventually, though, they would like to build a showroom or design studio within the next two years. To achieve that, they've determined they will need to increase revenue by 25 percent.

"Now is the time. We either grow it or we don't," Kelly said.

The couple are already ahead in that they have collected data on their current customer base, as well as their different target customers. The difficulty lies in creating a marketing strategy that would complement the diverse groups.

"We understand our market, where we want to go and whom we want to contact," Kelly said. "We simply struggle with how to compose what we are trying to say to each group and get it achieved in the most cost-effective manner."

### **The advice**

"Light Composers is unique in Tucson because they provide both design consultation and installation," said consultant Linda Welter Cohen, president of Caliber Communications in Tucson.

They're similar to other small businesses, though, in that they have a small marketing budget. They also face perceived competition by architects and interior designers.

Welter Cohen suggested that either David or Kelly begin attending trade meetings for architects, home builders and designers. By networking with these groups, they can build relationships and trust - helping the "opposition" see the lighting firm as a potential ally or partner, not a threat.

Most important, though, is that the couple retool the business's professional image - starting with the logo.

"Clients and referral sources are more likely to trust a business that appears professional," Welter Cohen said. "You don't want the logo to look like clip art."

She suggested hiring a professional graphic designer who could create a logo that reflects the company's brand and reputation. Using fewer colors would reduce printing costs, but the couple should keep in mind that the colors they eventually select must reinforce the company's image and personality.

The next step would be to create a brochure that would easily appeal to corporate clients but seem equally impressive to homeowners.

Once again, a graphic designer could help in incorporating essential text, along with some photographic elements depicting work done by Light Composers.

Attention should next be focused on the firm's Web site.

"There should be less copy and fewer yet better-quality photographs with captions," Welter Cohen suggested.

She also said the couple needs to "organize information to better represent key offerings in an easily navigable format."

Other low-cost recommendations include asking satisfied customers for referrals, and holding an open house for target groups in the home of a previous client to showcase their work.

Additionally, further familiarizing themselves with the industry will help the Rishors assess their own business. By reading trade magazines and newsletters, and speaking with people knowledgeable on the subject, they can get a better idea of who the successful firms are - what they're doing right, what they're not doing that Light Composers could do, and who they may want to align with.