

FOCUS

TOP LIST

Office Supplies,
Furniture & Equipment
Stores, pgs 4F & 5F

SIDE NOTES

Startup's high-tech lighting has bright future

By Zach Hagadone
IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW

There are about 35 million of them in the United States and their numbers grow every year. You drive past hundreds – maybe thousands – each day without noticing, and probably take them for granted even at night. But every year each one produces an average of 10 tons of carbon dioxide and the group is responsible for about 1 percent of all the electricity used in the country.

Street lights and other outdoor fixtures are such a basic part of the modern landscape that they go unnoticed, yet their basic compressed sodium technology hasn't changed since the middle part of the 20th century. Enter Inovus Solar, a 2-year-old Boise startup that's working to revolutionize the way the world is lit.

"Lighting's been an old technology game for so long and that's kind of changing with all this new emphasis on the Smart Grid," said John Hanousek, adviser to Inovus' board of directors and a major financial backer of the company.

The company's new light fixtures use light emitting diode (LED) modules powered by flexible solar absorbent sheets wrapped around the pole. Called the SmartPole, they are capable of operating independent of the power grid or, when connected and networked with remote sensors, actually feed power back to the grid during periods of peak demand.

Because they can be self-powered, SmartPoles eliminate the need to dig trenches and string wires, making them increasingly attractive to communities that want to reduce both their carbon footprints and operating expenses. But even without the solar wrapping, LED modules use about 60 percent less energy than traditional compressed sodium bulbs and last about twice as long.

"The main benefit would be energy savings and maintenance cost," said Hank Alarcon, street lighting engineer

See LIGHTING, pg 3F



PHOTOS BY KEN LEVY

Above, melted pewter is ladeled into a centrifugal-casting mold. The lead-free pewter is melted in a gas-fired pot at about 510-550 degrees.

At right, Craig Barker of Paloma Pewter in Eagle holds pewter tile "dots" that have been antiqued, then polished in a tumbler using ceramic media.



Big Horn Collectibles

"I had no shop, and I didn't have a garage; I had a carport. I'm casting with 900 degree metal in my face, and 120 degree sun on my back."
– Byron Barker, owner

Eagle foundry casts unique pewter tiles

By Ken Levy
SPECIAL TO THE IBR

From Las Vegas casinos to Costco.com, Big Horn Collectibles is meeting all levels of market demand for unique and beautiful decorative metal tiles.

Operated by Byron Barker and his wife, Lonni Leavitt-Barker, Big Horn Collectibles produces its Paloma Pewter line of tiles, liners and hardware in its Eagle foundry.

"Our niche is custom pieces that are hand done for people who are in exclusive homes, hotels or casinos," said Barker.

Big Horn's original, patterned tiles are used for floors and backsplashes,

in showers, outdoor kitchens, around pools, "anywhere decorative," said Barker. They come in eight finishes: sterling, pewter, antique pewter, satin, copper and oil-rubbed copper, brass and oil-rubbed brass.

The sterling finish is highly-polished pewter, according to Craig Barker, Byron's brother and foundry operator. Pewter tiles are polished in a tumbler with ceramic media. Other surfaces include a pewter color that uses a blackening agent that is polished off at the high points. The satin surface replicates a brushed metal effect that matches well with stainless steel faucets and bathroom fixtures, while the antique pewter finish resembles wrought iron with a scratched

surface, Craig said.

Brass and copper surfaces are applied at a plating shop in Salt Lake City through electroplating, which is a thin layer of brass or copper over the pewter base.

Besides the tiles, Big Horn makes liners, specialty pieces such as quarter rounds and corners, and hardware. The company markets its products at custom trade shows and showrooms.

"There are a couple of shows that are done for the tile industry every year that are paramount to anyone in this industry," said Barker.

While showing his work in Las Vegas at Surfaces in 2006, Byron was

See BIG HORN, pg 2F

A few ways to keep the office looking fine – Guest column, pg 2F

Promotions, new hires – People, pg 8F

After riding a wave, Big Horn tightens its belt

BIG HORN from pg 1F

approached by a Costco representative interested in Bighorn's products for Costco.com. After some negotiations, the Barkers created a line called CastalinaTile.com for the Costco Web site in 2008.

"It gives those with a Costco membership the ability to buy something that they would normally have to go through a high-end showroom," Byron said. "The prices are much more affordable."

Big Horn recently expanded its line by adding bronze to its line of decorative tiles.

"We've teamed up with another foundry in Indiana that is replicating our designs in a true bronze," said Byron.

He planned to showcase bronze and pewter tiles at Coverings, another tile-industry trade show in Chicago in April.

"We'll be introducing 30 new pieces in three different finishes," he said.

Barker began his foundry work by making cabinet hardware from his Tempe, Ariz. carport in the early 1990s.

"I had no shop, and I didn't have a garage; I had a carport," he said. "I'm casting with 900 degree metal in my face, and 120 degree sun on my back."

Barker purchased the Paloma Pewter line from a pair of artists in Scottsdale, Ariz. in the mid 1990s. He improved on



PHOTO BY KEN LEVY

Lonni Leavitt-Barker, co-owner of Big Horn Collectibles, shows centrifugal cast molds used to make decorative tiles at the firm's Eagle foundry. The company's Paloma Pewter line includes hundreds of design and finish combinations, along with hardware and other decorative metal products.

the artists' black-and-white advertising brochures by going to full color.

"We doubled sales in a few months," he said. "We're up to 300 pieces in eight

finishes, and the new bronze line brings on another three finishes. I searched the Internet high and low; nobody was doing any kind of metal decorative inserts. We

were in that time in the economy where everything was growing exponentially, and we rode that wave up, releasing new products and new finishes."

However, like many businesses, Bighorn has seen demand for its products wane during the current economic crunch.

"In our business, we've seen significant losses because we are connected so much with the construction industry," Byron said. "Even the high-end businesses are tightening their belts."

Bighorn has had to tighten its belt, as well.

"In December and January we saw a 60 percent decline in sales. That's scary," he said. "We've laid off some people, but we will bring them back on as the economy corrects. We aren't traveling as much to see our customers; we are making phone calls and sending e-mails. There's no substitute for going out and seeing people face to face."

Byron said he sees another year of tough times, but believes the tide will turn. He is especially glad he has kept Bighorn small.

"What I've always wanted to be is a small business," he said. "I've never wanted to rule the world. It's not my goal in life. Maybe that's just the artist in me coming out, but nobody's on blood-pressure medication. It's the life I want."

Adding value to a work space without a lot of money

By Tracy Crites
OFFICE PAVILION

Guest Column

Adding value to your work space can be easier than you think. Using a creative approach to making your space more functional, marketable and ergonomic can increase productivity, define your image and retain employees.

In good times and bad, it is important for businesses to remember that your office environment says a lot about your commitment to your product or service, the community and your employees.

This is an especially important message during slower periods because when the recovery happens, what companies do now will either set them up for success or leave them scrambling to catch up.

Organized environments

Work organizers give better control of work processes and boost performance.

These tools include trays, shelves and accessories, hanging from rails or sitting on the desktops. All the things that people use a lot, from paper to scissors to binders, to pens and pencils, can be kept in sight and in comfortable reach, where they help the most.

In smaller workstations with limited drawer storage, work organizers can hold files and supplies while using space efficiently.

Work organizers help to keep the work space less cluttered and the work more organized.

Increasing marketability

In a climate where businesses need to differentiate themselves from their competitors, branding is an important tool.

Existing systems can get a fresh,

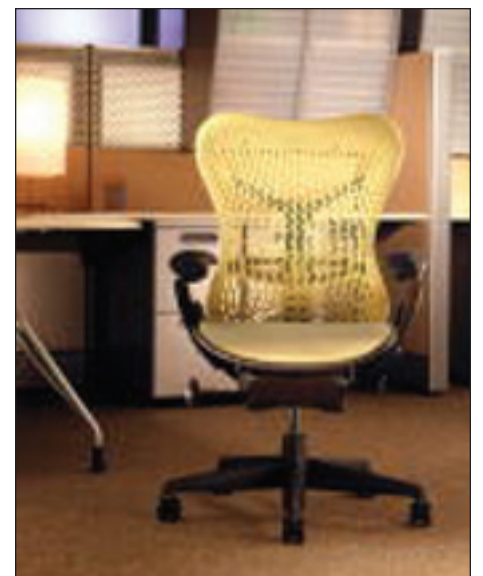
updated look by adding corporate images, logos, graphics or employee-centered pictures. This not only redefines the space but also gives the employees a greater sense of ownership, in turn, retaining skilled workers.

Ergonomic seating

Ergonomic seating enhances the working experience and increases productivity. For employees, the chair they sit in directly affects their comfort, cognitive function and creativity.

For the employer, selecting an ergonomic chair can directly affect his or her bottom line, preventing workers' compensation claims and work absences, and helping employees focus on completing tasks.

Tracy Crites is a sales account manager at Office Pavilion at 11613 W. Executive Drive in Boise. She can be reached at (208) 658-9111.



COURTESY PHOTO

A good chair affects the 'bottom line' of a business in more ways than one. It helps prevent workers' compensation claims and lets employees focus comfortably on their jobs.

