

Energy efficiency is so in right now part II: The delight factor (and more energy puns)

Guest blog by Cara Miale
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Last week, we looked at how the energy efficiency industry is working on its cool factor (Dare I say sex appeal?), to make clean energy more accessible to the masses.

Perhaps a bikini charger doesn't make much difference when the grid is under great strain as it was this summer; but it does get people thinking about alternatives that could lead to – or add up to – more important changes.

Time to shed some light on lighting. An energy efficient approach to lighting has gained traction in the commercial world – with wireless controls, dimmers and a clear ROI for building owners. But so far, consumer touch points have largely revolved around bulb efficiency standards – which are dull, governmental and even intrusive.

There are very cool things on the horizon, like Professor Haas' LED-light-based data transmission, which could feed our hunger for greater capacity for cell phones and all things Wi-Fi. Here are some other lighting innovations that might generate excitement at home (or rather, at your slick downtown condo):

- **Mood lighting made simple.** No, please – don't get up. This LED lightbulb from Sharp comes with a tiny remote that allows you to turn the bulb on and off, increase or decrease the brightness and even adjust the color temp (for mood lighting, perhaps?) all without lifting a finger (er, ok, barely lifting a finger). Its life is long, its efficiency impressive, but perhaps more importantly – it has novelty potential we haven't seen since the clap-on, clap-off lamp control. The bulbs start around \$40 – not cheap for the average consumer – but then again, what are a couple of Jacksons compared to how smooth you'll look on date night?
- **Party on the patio.** The Oasys from Sol is a complete unit that houses their aiSUN controller, batteries, and LED fixture. When darkness falls, the party doesn't have to end: reliable light (and again, spiffy dimming capabilities) can be yours. Although we must say, their website needs a few tips on more accessible language if they're going to get through to us.
- **Energy on display while you're away.** These days, being cool is not always about how much money you can spend – you also get bragging rights for snagging great deals (hence the Groupon boom) and saving money. The PowerCost Monitor is an inexpensive, DIY system that reads home electricity usage and transmits it to your iPhone or iPad – so you can see how much energy your pad (your house, that is) is gobbling while you're away. You can slice and dice your data and track usage in kilowatt-hours (zzzzz) and in dollars and cents (even better).

Blue Line Innovations and People Power have also done a great job of connecting with the consumer market – they not only use mobile apps to drive their technology; they're also all over social media, and recently moved their technology to the cloud through a partnership with [PlotWatt](#) for real time updates. They even use video to explain their product activation to users.

These are a few of my favorite, cool energy gadgets. Do you know others? Let's encourage the trend; post in the comments section here any you've come across.