



RE-MANUFACTURED PROJECTOR LAMPS – A GREAT IDEA OR NOT?

In this week's press, recycling projection lamps was a topic of hot debate. Projector Lamp Services, LLC (Bohemia, NY; www.relampit.com) announced a new "green" initiative related to their projection lamp re-manufacturing services. The announcement made a good case for the benefits that can be gained from re-manufacturing. On the other hand, two other articles debated the practicality of the process. Replacement projector bulb specialist Hotlamps LTD. (Reading, England; www.hotlamps.co.uk) came down on the NO side of the debate. The reason cited for discontinuing sale of refurbished lamps: safety fears. On the other hand, Just Lamps (Berkshire United Kingdom; www.justlamps.net) made a strong case for YES and continues to offer such services. To support their point of view, Just Lamps published an endorsement of their recycling technology and products from premier original lamp manufacturer, Philips Lighting (Amsterdam, The Netherlands; www.nam.lighting.philips.com).

Lamp refurbishment consists of removing an old bulb and replacing it with a new one while keeping the old lamp module, housing and connectors.

Projector Lamp Services (PLS) established in May, 2007, announced a new campaign to raise general awareness about environmentally friendly options for AV users. Project Green includes recycling mercury containing components, re-using or re-manufacturing products when possible, extending the life of current projection equipment and using environmentally friendly replacement products. More specifically, PLS aims to spread the word about environmentally responsible use of projection displays.

To that end, PLS has developed a process claimed to allow front and rear projector light sources to be re-manufactured at a reduced cost and without compromising lifetime or performance. PLS also offers a no charge projector lamp recycling service. The PLS Projector Lamp Recycling Center, serves to reduce waste and consequential environmental mercury contamination from the lamps found in front and rear projectors.

Sounds good but David Weatherhead, Business Manager at Hotlamps explained that there are several concerns. These include the danger of mercury spills; connector degeneration; breakage of lamp housings and dust particle build up. Apparently there is a concern that, during the process of re-manufacturing, mercury could escape and be left on the old housing. If so, this would constitute a potential health hazard to those who carry out the refurbishment and to the users of the lamps. Weatherhead stated, "We wouldn't want to put the health and safety of our staff or customers at risk, so we have decided to terminate this service at once." Weatherhead added, "Most projector lamp housings are not designed to allow easy access to the bare bulb and often have to be broken into during replacement. Rebuilding the housing could mean that it then becomes difficult to fit properly into the projector and it becomes a fire risk. These risks, combined with the significant impact on the performance of the lamps has led us to re-evaluate the service and we have deemed it ethically and

morally unacceptable. When there is a greater risk that lamps could overheat and make the lamp explode or the projector malfunction, it is something we do not want to be part of.” WOW!

An immediate response came from competitor Just Lamps, which says that re-manufactured units can be both safe and economical.

Just Lamps founder Dave Bethell stated that, “We entirely agree with keeping a safety-first policy towards all aspects of the replacement lamp business. Before launching our Diamond re-lamping service we spent six months working closely with the bulb manufacturers ensuring that we fully understood the process, had access to all the correct materials (original bulbs, specialist tools, connectors etc.), invested in approved cleaning processes (to remove any traces of broken glass and mercury) and that our staff had been fully trained.”

“I cannot comment on the process or end-result of anyone else’s re-lamp service, but I can comment about ours. The way that we carry out our refurbishment process has been developed with original lamp manufacturers and has been deemed perfectly safe and any suggestion that our Diamond re-lamps offer any less performance or increased risk over original lamps wouldn’t be true.”

To support his case, Bethell provided a quote from Philips Lighting’s VP of global marketing, Ney Corsino. “We are concerned about copy or branded lamps entering the aftermarket due to their relatively poor performance and the potential threat unregulated product could pose to health and safety”.

Corsino explained that, “We sought out alternatives with Just Lamps for solutions that offer genuine performance but at the lower cost of ownership. Throughout the development of their Diamond re-lamping process, we have tested and approved every step to ensure it meets the high standards of Philips Lighting and matches the original specification of the projector manufacturer.”

Bethell added, “Since we launched our re-lamping service we have provided almost 1,000 refurbished lamps which are all perfectly safe, and performing every bit as well as the original lamps did when they were new.”

“What’s more we have given the projector users an environmentally responsible option whilst saving them money (on average, about 30 percent). Over the coming months we will broaden the range of Diamond Re-lamps available beyond the current range of 750 models and we have just increased the margins available for the dealers.”

Who is right and who is wrong? Do re-manufactured lamps perform well and are they safe for both the manufacturer and user? The answer is that each is right. As Gina Sansivero, Sales & Marketing Manager at Projector Lamp Services put it, Hotlamps approached the re-lamping business from a distributor background, but we approached it from a lamp manufacturer’s background.” Therefore, we conclude that with the right experience and training, re-lamping can be a safe and lower cost solution.

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