



Not All Can Succeed in Relamping Business

Recycling projection lamps has become 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 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. But Just Lamps (Berkshire United Kingdom; www.justlamps.net) doesn't agree. They 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).

When the lamp on a projector burns out or gets too dim, the end user must typically by an entire lamp replacement module including the burner, reflector and cage assembly (often custom designed) for each projection product. The alternative is to buy a “re-lamped” module that replaces the burner but reuses the reflector, connectors and cage assembly. This will save costs for the end user, but not everyone who is offering this service agrees it is the best way to go.

End users can buy replacement lamp modules from the projector makers or from dozens of lamp resellers. These products feature all new components, but the prices can be steep – typically \$350 and up. This often can tip an end user into simply buying a new projector!

What re-lamping does is try to reuse some of these components to lower the cost of the replacement. Several companies have jumped into this service, but one, Hotlamps, has created a bit of a stir in the industry by exiting the business. Hotlamps is a subsidiary of UK-based Maverick, one of Europe's largest AV distributors.

According to David Weatherhead of Hotlamps, “It is the danger risks of re-lamping that Hotlamps is particularly opposed to, and these combined with the significant impact on the performance of the lamps has led us re-evaluate the service and deem it as 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.”



These are some pretty inflammatory words. What Weatherhead is concerned about are several things. First, removing the quartz burner from the reflector can sometimes result in breakage of the burner and the spilling of hazardous mercury. If

this is not handled properly, it can represent a danger for the re-lamper and the end user.

He also pointed to the fact that the connectors can often show signs of wear and can fail causing shorts and a fire hazard. In addition, the cage assembly can sometimes be damaged upon removal, compromising fit, and function in the projector. And, if there is any dust residue left on the lamp, it can cause overheating and reduction in lamp lifetime.

But beside the dangers, Weatherhead stated that there was “no economy in re-lamping and if the price point isn’t radically different, then the cost-conscious buyer is better off with a brand new compatible than a re-lamp.”

Some in the industry have even proposed a do-it-yourself re-lamping capability whereby end users buy only the quartz lamp and try to re-lamp their lamp module. Hotlamps clearly does not support this option either.

But there is a counter-argument to the Hotlamps conclusion. For this side of the equation, we talked with Gina Sansivero, Sales & Marketing Manager at Projector Lamp Services, a group that was spun off from UHP lamp maker eele last May to focus on this opportunity.

Sansivero agrees with all of the potential problems that can result in a re-lamping service, as described by Hotlamps, but says their approach to re-lamping is fundamentally different, which makes it a safe and acceptable solution.

“Hotlamps approached re-lamping from being a distributor of lamps,” said Sansivero. “We approach it as lamp manufacturers. We are accustomed to dealing with the manufacturing and the handling of all of the components and materials and have years of experience in doing it. We have technicians who are trained to manufacture lamps doing our re-lamping operations. They operate in a clean environment, wear masks, and clean the re-lamped modules with methanol before they are shipped to ensure they are clean and free of dust.”

Sansivero says they source burners from eele as well as several other manufacturers. As a result, they can now refurbish more than 95% of the lamp module SKUs in the 100W to 300W range.

This has benefits for end users and lamp resellers too. Sansivero says that their average end user re-lamped price is \$250, 25% to 50% less than the comparable new lamp module price. Resellers can save 20-40% on their costs by using a re-lamped module. And, according to Sansivero, end users will be tempted to buy the re-lamped module if they can save \$50, which is easily done.

Projector Lamp Services is also wrapping up this re-lamping service in a green AV campaign. This claims that re-lamping is better for the environment as it using recycling. One clear benefit: the company will recycle the mercury in the lamps. And, its no-charge recycling program allows end users to send in the lamps and get a recycling certificate so they don’t throw them in the trash or pay \$2.50 to recycle the lamp.

Also jumping into the debate was 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,” continued Bethell. “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%). 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.”

So, Hotlamps will return to selling new lamp replacement modules while Just Lamps and Projector Lamp Services will forge ahead with re-lamping. But the bottom line is that both are probably right. You need to have the right skills to do this properly and it would appear that Hotlamps does not and PLS and Just Lamps do.

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