

Enlight's Energy Efficient Lighting Making Inroads

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by [Mavis Scanlon](#)



Stephanie Secrest | East Bay Business Times

Matt Tracy specializes in lighting parking lots and college campuses.

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For Matt Tracy, starting Enlight Inc. was a now-or-never proposition.

He woke up one Friday in August 2005 with the realization that, at 46 years old, he was either going to continue what he was doing for the next 15 or 20 years, or strike out on his own. By the following month, he had left the lighting company where he spent 13 years and was running his own company.

A year later, he believes he made the right decision. He is winning big contracts, such as the lighting retrofit he did at the Mervyn's headquarters parking garage in Hayward, counts Chevron Energy Solutions as his largest customer, and is doing environmentally friendly work he feels good about.

More efficient lighting systems are a basic and inexpensive way for businesses to save energy. In that respect, Enlight has tapped into a surging movement to reduce energy usage and carbon emissions.

Not that selling energy efficiency by itself will convince someone to change their lights.

"You have to go out and call (customers), bug them enough times until they decide to talk to you," Tracy said.

Fortunately for Tracy, several of the clients he worked with at his previous company joined him, and he knew the types of customers who might be thinking about lighting jobs.

Enlight is developing a specialty in parking garages and educational institutions. In addition to the Mervyn's job, he has performed energy-saving lighting upgrades for Stanford University, San Jose State University, San Francisco State University, Menlo College, Cal State East Bay and Santa Clara University, to name a few.

While as much as two-thirds of Enlight's work comes through Tracy's direct selling, the company also relies on larger contracting partners, such as Chevron Energy Solutions.

Enlight likely will be the lighting contractor for one of Chevron's largest upcoming jobs, an energy overhaul at the Contra Costa Community College District.

"We definitely would envision Matt participating in that," said John Gajan, senior project director at Chevron Energy Solutions, who added that the district has not yet given the project the green light.

The \$30 million job includes about \$1 million in lighting retrofits at the district's three campuses, Contra Costa College, Diablo Valley College and Los Medanos College.

"The thing we appreciate about Enlight and Matt in particular is that he's always been an extremely responsive person and company,"

Gajan said. "Whether working for another company or now, as an owner, he has a very high focus on the customer and relationship building."

Entrepreneurship was not exactly running through Tracy's veins - his father worked for Lockheed Martin, and his mother was a junior high school counselor. But even as a youngster, Tracy realized he could make more money working for himself than slinging burgers at McDonald's.

In high school he washed windows and built fences. In college, he bought a small stereo sales business, Stereo Stu's, from a graduating senior and renamed it Matt's Music.

After he received his MBA from Duke University, he worked for a small machine tool company. After a couple of years, he moved back to the Bay Area to look for a business to run. His criteria: a business he could feel good about, that worked with easily obtainable materials, and that used relatively unskilled labor.

Tracy says Enlight is turning a profit, despite being in business for 14 months. He keeps the company's overhead very low. Most of his 2,500-square-foot office is warehouse space. He and Maria share one office; a second office can be used as a conference room.

He also believes in taking care of his employees. He covers the premium for the lowest-cost health-care plan he offers, for example, and matches 100 percent of his employees 401(k) contributions, up to the first 4 percent contributed. Doing right by his employees is something else he can feel good about.

Enlight Energy Efficient Lighting Inc.

Business: Energy efficient lighting installation

Headquarters: Pleasanton

Founded: 2005

President: Matt Tracy

Employees: 10

2006 revenue: \$2.5 million (projected)

Income: N/A

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