Staff Photographer/Business Case Brief
November 15, 2013
Molly Badgett for Jeff Taylor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A suggestion has been made recently to alter the use of the company facility that serves as the Acuity Brands photo studio. We believe that our photography needs do, in fact, need to be reviewed, but we have an altogether different perspective. We strongly suggest investing not only in the photography studio to keep it up to date for our product-marketing needs, but also in an internal, full-time photographer to mitigate our overall photography costs even more. A photographer skilled in every aspect of digital-photography would eliminate the majority of our external photography costs while providing much-needed photography-management support to Acuity Brands product-marketing support teams.

SITUATION

It is through product photography that we – and our competitors – help sell products. This photography is a labor-intensive endeavor that usually is outsourced to a freelance photographer who, more often than not, uses our on-site photo studio for taking product photos.

This freelance product photographer, an approved vendor, is paid for his time and travel, and we benefit from his familiarity with our studio and much of our product lines. The photographer charges by the day or half-day, but the cost is mitigated by not having to rent outside studio space.

AN IMPORTANT OPTION FOR OUR ROI

While hiring a freelance photographer certainly has its benefits, it has its drawbacks, too, Over the course of a year, we can spend more than $100,000 in hiring a freelance photographer; this makes it worth reviewing an alternative.

Currently, we average 90+ days per year hiring a freelance photographer to shoot photos of our products. At an average of $1,200/day, that's a significant expense for only 90+ days of work. If we hired, instead, a full-time photographer *who has other needed skills*, we could see a significant return on that investment.

For starters, the photographer would be immediately accessible whenever a photography need arises, on-site or off. (If the opportunity to get photography of an actual product installation, the full-time photographer would even be available to shoot at a customer's location for application shots we are sorely lacking.)

A full-time photographer adept at 3D rendering and photography retouching would be an invaluable resource to our product-marketing support teams. The digital treatment of photography is a growing need based on new media trends, and outsourcing of this nature can be costly.

Finally, if the full-time employee was well-versed/trained on an intranet-based content-management system, he or she could develop and maintain an online Acuity Brands photography library. Such a library would allow us, for the first time, to digitally organize our existing photography to mirror our products' organizational structure. This would save all our marketing-support employees a tremendous amount of time that they currently spend searching for photos to use in marketing collateral, award entries, media relations, Web site marketing, e-mail announcements, etc.

SUGGESTED ACTION

Given the nature of our marketing and the speed at which we launch products, the time has come to hire a full-time Acuity Brands photographer. By requiring of this hire some important, additional skills associated with digital photography, we could manage our photography assets in ways we've never done before, ways that keep up with current media and the means by which customers expect to view our products.

By hiring an internal photographer to use the on-site photo studio, we virtually *eliminate all external photography costs.* We gain, however, better access and more control over our valuable product photography.