



P E E R L E S S®



Peerless Lighting, www.peerless-lighting.com an Acuity Brands Lighting company (NYSE:AYI), has been an innovator in commercial lighting products for nearly 120 years. Peerless pioneered the use of indirect lighting in the workplace and today is leading the revolution in lighting for people. Peerless has been repeatedly recognized for its contributions to lighting technology, including having employees named to the Architectural Lighting Hall of Fame for their contributions to the art and science of lighting. As a result, Peerless has become the supplier of choice to architects and interior designers across the country. Peerless is known for delivering a combination of quality, efficiency and design in lighting that delivers on its motto of "lighting for people."

Application Brief:

Improving product development at Peerless Lighting

"Vuuch is now the standard system for managing our product development process at Peerless and, increasingly, is the way our partners across Acuity Brands participate in our product development efforts. Vuuch is helping Peerless better our product development system and will help us maintain our reputation for innovative lighting."

KAI JAFFE is at the center of Peerless's efforts to enhance and maintain its product superiority. Kai's challenging job includes multiple duties. He helps manage the product development process, keeping all members of the team focused on creating exceptional new products, and, being a member of the marketing team, helps craft and execute Peerless's marketing materials.

As the pace and complexity of these roles increased, Kai began to realize that the current development process needed substantial improvement. "We had a spreadsheet that we used to keep track of product development tasks," said Kai. "It was being uploaded to Microsoft® SharePoint®, but I think nobody was really looking at it until moments before our weekly team meeting. As a result, I was never certain of the real-time status of important tasks and issues throughout the week leading up to our meeting. I either had to spend a lot of time chasing down people for updates or use email to get updates. And using back and forth emails to update the status on the spreadsheet took way too long, especially if you have to coordinate lots and lots of updates from the team. At the meetings, I would have to spend a lot of time updating the whole team on the status of each project. After the meetings, I would still have to update the spreadsheet – which was already out-of-date the minute the meeting was over. It was a frustrating loop. I knew we could do better."

So, in late 2010, Jaffe began looking for a new system to help his team with the product development process. Jaffe attended a Vuuch webinar and was attracted by some of the core features of Vuuch. Those include the ability for people to easily update the status of deliverables using a web portal, a plug-in or even email. However the development team chose to work with Vuuch, the social system would organize and coordinate the updates in real-time, Vuuch's social technology also meant that he could easily invite people to participate. People would not have to change the way they prefer to work. And because Vuuch is cloud-based, Jaffe could try the social system without requiring any IT resources or programming, making the system easy for his team to adopt.

"Truthfully, at first my colleagues went along with Vuuch because they wanted to support my personal productivity," admits Jaffe. "Vuuch was easy to understand and very effective in initially helping me to replace the spreadsheet. I was able to import the data and start using Vuuch right away."



The results were immediate. As a result of using Vuuch, the weekly meeting went from over an hour to less than 30 minutes. The savings in meeting time delivered a return-on-investment of Peerless's resources of less than a month.

Impressive as the return on investment for meetings is, Peerless has achieved additional returns as it has deployed Vuuch more broadly.

For more information about Vuuch, please visit www.vuuch.com or email contact@vuuch.com.

But the real change in the way Peerless developed products began when Jaffe began to use a computer in the weekly update meetings and update the tasks, issues and discussions he was tracking in Vuuch in front of the team. "People began to see how simple it was to update the status of their activities so that everyone on the team could be updated before the meeting even started," says Kai. "And that was enough to get people to sign in and start updating information directly in Vuuch." It became apparent that the whole team could benefit from using Vuuch. It was a big time saver, would lead to less searching in email, better organization of topics and the ability to dynamically include people who needed to be part of the team, even if they needed to participate only temporarily.

"Vuuch did not impose a specific workflow on our product development team. The fact that we could make it do what we wanted to - without programming - meant that the team was motivated to participate. They can update the status of their activities quickly and easily without having to learn 'yet another tool'."

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Vuuch also offers Peerless a new, social way of working with its vendors and sister companies inside Acuity Brands. With Vuuch's social technology, there are no access control lists that have to be updated to integrate outside vendors into Peerless's Vuuch environment; Peerless people need to only invite a vendor to a specific activity to work with them.

Peerless's proprietary information is protected from any one vendor because it is only invited to a specific activity. Also, partners working with Peerless know that when an issue or task is logged into Vuuch, it will get the right level of attention from the right level of people. Nobody needs to call others to inquire if that person has "seen my email," as is often the case when using email to interact between product development and manufacturing.

Today, Kai says that Vuuch lets the whole team see the status of its projects in real time. And he is no longer emailing spreadsheets around. In fact, there are Vuuch pages and activities in which Jaffe himself is not a participant, a testament to the ease of use of the social system and its broad applicability to a number of different use cases inside Peerless. In addition, Jaffe's management uses Vuuch to keep track of what is going on. His only complaint is that he now has to export information *out* of Vuuch for spreadsheets to be integrated with reports from Acuity Brands companies that have not yet adopted Vuuch.

As Jaffe points out, "Vuuch is now the standard system for managing our product development process at Peerless and, increasingly, is the way our partners across Acuity Brands participate in our product development efforts. Vuuch is helping Peerless better our product development system and will help us maintain our reputation for innovative lighting."

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