A pioneer of the Ford® Go Green dealer sustainability initiative, Szott Ford is illuminating its lot with Cree® LED lighting. The difference is "stunning."
Opportunity

The exterior lighting of his Ford® dealership in Holly, Michigan had been an issue for Todd Szott for more than a decade. Maintenance of the metal halide fixtures was “a constant battle.” Bulbs would dim very quickly, and his sales staff had to carry flashlights in order to read information on a window sticker.

“The lighting was just abysmal,” says Szott Ford general manager Steve Gabbara. “That’s the long and short of it.”

So when it came time for a general remodel last year, Szott recognized that the time was right to remedy that predicament.

In fact, the timing was perfect, given that Ford was looking for dealers ready to take the lead in its Go Green® initiative, a program designed to help them reduce their carbon footprints and improve the energy efficiency of their operations.

Solution

In collaboration, Gexpro and Cree offer customized interior and exterior lighting solutions designed to save money and be more energy-efficient. They had a solution that precisely met Szott Ford’s needs.

“Once we saw that we could really custom tailor our lot with the different luminaires,” Gabbara says, “we were sold.”

The dealership sits beside a major highway, I-75, and much of its inventory faces it. “We realized we could increase the light output for the front-line inventory along the interstate with one type of luminaire, then go with a wider distribution farther into the lot,” he says. “That was pretty exciting for us.”

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Along that front line, Cree Edge™ High Output luminaires have been installed, featuring Cree TrueWhite® Technology for industry-leading 90 CRI color quality and performance. The High Output solution also features Cree FrontlineOptic™ Technology, developed specifically for the needs of automotive dealerships.

Elsewhere, throughout the lot, is Cree® OSQ Series area lighting, offering advanced thermal management and a clean, modern housing with versatile mounting options.

The dealership is subject to pretty strict local lighting regulations, and the Cree lighting is the perfect solution.

“We have the ability to control the Cree® LED lighting more precisely than we could with our previous lighting,” Szott explains. “With the local regulation, the light can only be one foot-candle at the lot line. By going with the LEDs, we were confident we could get the maximum light, and if we had a problem with the township we could just dim it down a little.”

WHEN GOING GREEN MEANS SPRUCING UP

“The color looks great from the highway; it looks great underneath. It’s more uniform. And you can definitely better appreciate the colors of the cars.”

Todd Szott | Owner, Szott Ford
Benefits

The LED lighting was installed in stages over the course of about a month, and Gabbara says the comparison of a newly lit section against one with the previous lighting was striking: “It looked like the difference between a bright sunny day and an overcast day – it was that significant.”

He recalls that when the job was completed, one of his sales reps walked in and said, “I swear it looks like you’re in Comerica Park” – home of the Detroit Tigers – “everything is lit up so nicely out there.”

Szott Ford keeps evening hours two days a week, and those hours are typically the busiest of the week. “We’re doing a lot of business under those lights,” Gabbara says. Then, after those business hours, a controller allows them to dim the lights down to, perhaps, 10 percent. Motion sensors bring them back up to full power. The dealership is thereby enhancing security while saving energy.

The night the first heavy snow of the season arrived, the difference the new lighting made was more dramatic still. Gabbara describes it: “You’ve got pitch-black skies and a completely white ground, and these brilliant LEDs are bouncing off this fresh white snow. It was really stunning.”

In sum, Gabbara says, because of the optics, the lights can be directed as needed. “It’s not like doubling the light; it’s more like quintupling it.”

Moreover, the dealership is avoiding the hassle of having to regularly swap out bulbs, projecting to save hundreds of dollars a year in maintenance. Estimated payback for the Cree LED lighting solution is 2.3 years.

“I’m very pleased,” Szott concludes. “The color looks great from the highway; it looks great underneath. It’s more uniform. And you can definitely better appreciate the colors of the cars.

“We certainly have gotten better light out there. And that’s good for business.”

“Once we saw that we could really custom tailor our lot with the different fixtures, we were sold.”

Steve Gabbara  |  General Manager, Szott Ford

*Payback and energy savings are based on the national average electricity rate, recommended maintenance schedule, and typical maintenance costs over common assessment periods (application life).
Cree® LED Lighting Used

- Cree Edge™ Series High Output Area
- Cree® OSQ Series Area

Participants

End User: Szott Ford, MI
Cree Strategic Partner: Gexpro

Visit lighting.cree.com or contact a Cree lighting representative to learn more.