



Speed Product Selection with the Cooper Lighting Buyer's Guide CD-ROM

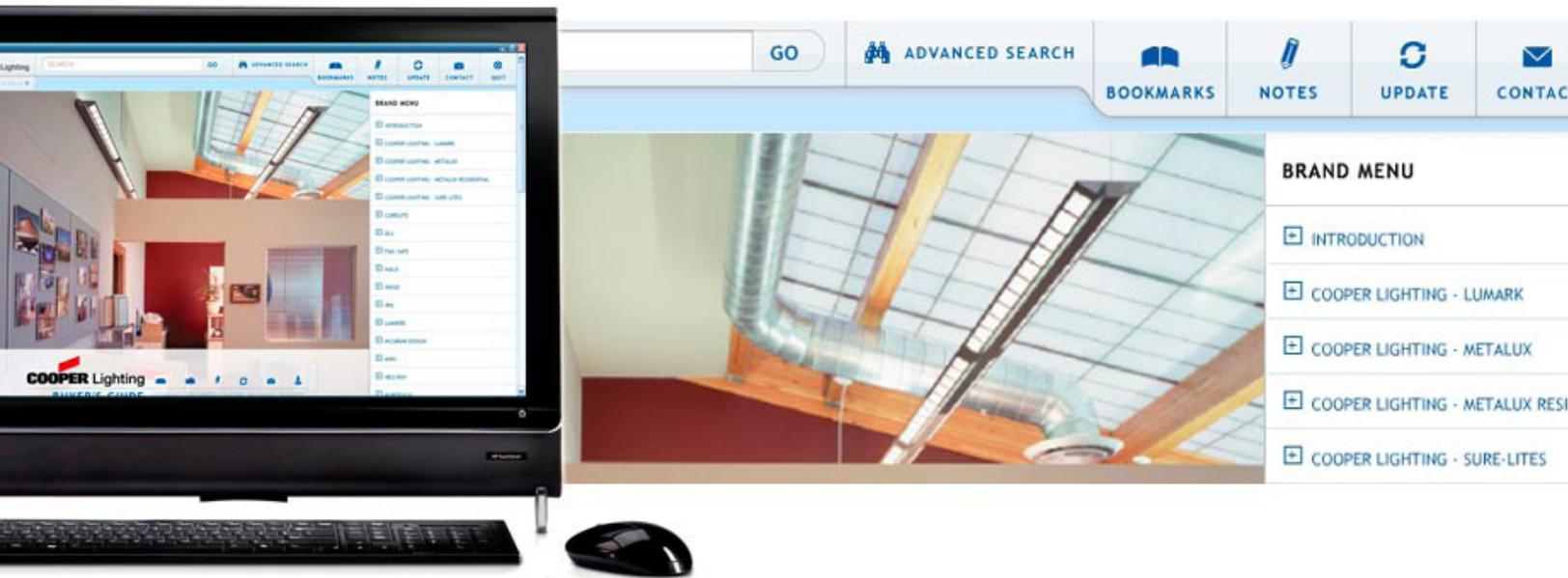
The Cooper Lighting Buyer's Guide Application was designed to be distributed via CD-ROM with monthly Internet-based automatic updates provided by Cooper, immediately making the printed catalog obsolete.

Situation

Cooper Lighting previously offered only a printed Buyer's Guide catalog, at a cumbersome 1,164 pages, with a projected life span of 30 months. The information contained within the printed catalog was often out of date or incorrect long before the life span of the catalog itself. Cooper Lighting sought a way to lower the costs associated with the printed catalog while simultaneously improving the quality and accuracy of the content. Cooper Lighting regularly prints and distributes 100,000 Buyer's Guides at a cost of \$6.75 each.

Action

Before production began, a comprehensive tactical plan was developed to outline all functionality and data requirements. Doing so insured consensus from all vested parties (the client, IT staff, marketing, product managers and the software design team).



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At the time, Cooper Lighting did not have a comprehensive product database. While each brand was contained in the printed catalog, the brands themselves suffered from a lack of consistency in terms of electronic records. As a result, a product database had to be created by manual entry of information copied from the QuarkXPress and Adobe Acrobat source files for the printed Buyer's Guide. The information gleaned was standardized and entered into a prototype of the applications' custom Editor.

EchoViz employed an early and often methodology for informal internal usability testing and iconography evaluation. Additionally, a formal, structured usability test with actual users occurred with the Beta version of the application. A less structured survey-based test was performed with users of the Gamma version prior to the final release of the software. Colors and menu navigation were pre-determined based on corporate identity standards for Cooper Lighting and the individual product brands.

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Users of the Beta and Gamma versions of the application commented on how convenient the electronic catalog was to use. Many of them left the application running in the background all day, referring to it as often as several times an hour. The keyword search saved a great deal of time. Performance for lighting specifiers was increased because sending information to a client no longer involved the printed catalog, a photocopier and a fax machine. Specifiers who used the application selected a product from the menu, saved a PDF of the product features, and emailed the information resulting in a much more efficient operation.

Result

The Buyer's Guide application is designed to automatically revise and update the entire product list and features for every product in all of Cooper Lighting's brands; it is the former 1,164-page printed catalog -- without an expiration date, and much more. As the cornerstone of Cooper Lighting's marketing efforts, the Buyer's Guide application is the single place where employees of Cooper Lighting, lighting resellers and distributors, architects, designers and product specifiers can find information on any Cooper Lighting product. The application contains interactive features such as keyword searching, the ability to save individual catalog pages for printing and e-mail, bookmarking and annotation of individual catalog pages, as well as the ability to create project folders of saved catalog pages and notes along with externally added content such as JPGs, Word files or PowerPoint presentations. There is a separate, companion back-end Editor application for use by Cooper employees that enables database modifications to support the automatic update feature.

If the user does not request an update every 30 days, a reminder appears to prompt an update. In fact, the database created for the CD-ROM through manual entry by EchoViz became the basis of the company's overall product database.

Not only is information always current, additional replication of the CDs, including printing and packaging, costs a mere \$1.03 per disc. Compared to \$6.75 per catalog, the Buyer's Guide Application represents an 80% savings per unit for Cooper Lighting. As a result, the bottom line is reduced due to the fact that development costs for the application are paid for in eight months, speed to market is increased with the ability to update online, the value of the content is higher because it's always correct, quality is increased because mistakes can be instantly corrected, and production costs are dramatically reduced. The final result is that the value of the Buyer's Guide Application exceeds any previous Cooper Lighting marketing tool.

The Cooper Lighting Buyer's Guide Application won Bronze Horizon Interactive Awards in both 2005 and 2006.

About Echo Visualization

Echo Visualization, LLC, (EchoViz) is a boutique interaction design & user experience consultancy with a strong background in industrial design, user-centered design, research, and brand management. We provide a wide spectrum of services including business analysis, digital strategy, user research, information architecture, interactive media, graphic design, data visualization, early stage concepting, interactive prototyping, animation, software development, implementation and QA testing. Throughout our work, we use established design strategies and advanced visualization techniques to engage customers and build brands. We are big thinkers and talented designers who strive to make an emotional connection with users by eliciting desire and delight with the interfaces we design.

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