Although you do not often hear about growth in domestic manufacturing here in the United States, the solid-state lighting industry is steadily growing and establishing a manufacturing presence here at home. Solid-state lighting was not only born of U.S. ingenuity and R&D, but is also riding the crest of a worldwide trend toward greater energy efficiency. This offers a golden opportunity for U.S. manufacturing to take a significant role in SSL. From time to time, the Postings focus on SSL companies manufacturing here in the U.S., in a series called “SSL in America.” This is not intended to endorse or promote any of the companies, but rather to describe advances in energy-efficient solid-state lighting. The activities you’ll read about here are consistent with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) white paper “Prospects for U.S.-Based Manufacturing in the SSL Industry.”

Spotlight on Cireon

Cireon is a manufacturer of LED luminaires for the commercial market, mainly high- and low-bay, canopy lighting, and area lighting, with a few troffers and task lights thrown into the mix. The company sells only through resellers — distributors, lighting dealerships, and electrical contractors — with end users running the gamut from parking lots, auto dealerships, and offices to warehouses, factories, and schools and universities.

Cireon started in 2008, and its first product — an LED parking-garage luminaire — came out the following year. The company is headquartered in Moorpark, CA, which is between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. About two dozen people work at the facility: engineers, executives, sales staff, procurement personnel, and production workers. According to founder and CEO Jim Dilbeck, all of Cireon’s products are assembled in Moorpark, and some of the machining is done there as well.

What’s more, Jim says, with the exception of the LEDs and power supplies, all of the company’s proprietary components — such as the injection molding, extrusion, die casting, metal fabrication and stamping, LED board population, and various subassemblies — are done or manufactured by U.S. companies in U.S. facilities, many of them in neighboring towns.

One advantage of manufacturing domestically, Jim notes, is that it makes it easier to protect intellectual property than if the manufacturing were done overseas. Another advantage, he says, is that it shrinks lead time considerably — generally to one to two weeks, which helps Cireon win contracts from customers anxious to receive products quickly, while also reducing the amount of inventory the company has to stock in order to fulfill orders in a timely manner. He adds that with a rapidly evolving technology such as SSL — and a market such as lighting, which experiences considerable demand
fluctuation — cutting down on inventory also lowers cost by keeping product obsolescence to a minimum.

Still another advantage of manufacturing in the U.S., Jim observes, is that it makes it easier to quickly resolve any quality-control issues that might arise. He says the company is committed to revitalizing U.S. manufacturing, which is part of its mission statement, but he notes that being able to say that the products are made in the USA also confers significant PR and marketing benefits.

On the flip side, Jim concedes that costs are lower overseas than in the U.S., but he says that’s offset by the many advantages of manufacturing domestically. He notes that while most of Cireon’s customers are in the U.S., he’s looking to tap into overseas markets, and is considering opening several overseas manufacturing facilities to better serve those markets.

Cireon is among a number of companies that are working to create and strengthen a solid-state lighting manufacturing base here in the U.S. This will not only help bring significant energy savings through more efficient lighting products, but will benefit our economy by adding jobs at multiple levels of the supply chain.

As always, if you have questions or comments, you can reach us at postings@akoyaonline.com.