

Ziplux, Brazil's Answer to Ecological Lamppost

Contributed by Geovana Pagel
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ZIPlux, a company from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which has developed an innovative method for lighting public streets, is about to win the Arab market. The contacts with future importers were guaranteed during the company's participation in two fairs in the region: Rebuild Iraq, that took place in Amman, Jordan, at the end of May, and Light Middle East, in June, in Dubai.

The great innovation of the equipment is that it does not use lighting fixtures or optic sets at the top to issue the light. The light source is a reflexive lamp appropriate for use with an optic fiber cable. It is located at the base of the post, about 1.5 meters (4.9 feet) above the ground. From there the light is sent to the top of the steel totem pole, over 4 meters (13 feet) above the ground, through optic fibers and with no kind of lighting fixture.

"The economy is enormous because more than 99% of the light generated arrives at the point desired, different from the current solution. As it is flexible, the system may be used with electric or solar energy and maintenance may be done by just one person. The bulb has a working life of up to 50,000 hours, about 20,000 more than those used today," explained designer Walen Nogueira Cruz Júnior, a director at ZIPlux and one of the idealizers of the project.

"We believe that our product is applied widely in the Middle East. Our market depends on civil construction and we have a broad range of contacts in the region. We have also been informed that over 30% of the worlds cranes are there. The United Arab Emirates is an extremely attractive market," stated Júnior.

Apart from that, according to the businessman, Arab clients are demanding, have high buying power and appreciate design and technological innovation as a differential. "It is a market that is avid for new technology and for sustainable development," he added.

And it is not just the Arab market that is in the list of possible clients. Countries in Europe, Africa and the United States are already showing interest in the novelty. "The foreign market is greatly attractive for us. On exporting, we eliminate all taxes on the productive chain and, with this, our export product has a very competitive price," stated the designer.

The combination of efficiency, low cost and environmental care, on economizing electric energy, has granted to the IDEA/Brasil team the most important design award in the United States, which has included the country 30 years after it was started.

They won the gold award in Commercial and Industrial Lighting Products, competing against 343 works in 18 different categories. "Opportunities were already arising, but they were greatly expanded after the award. Visits to our site grew over 350%," celebrates Júnior.

ZIPlux is one of the companies in the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro's Coordination of Post Graduate Programs (Coppe/UFRJ) and is run by 10 professionals: four engineers, two designers and three sales engineers.

As is the case in most technological innovation, the system originated almost by chance. In 1998, during the summer in Rio de Janeiro, Walen Júnior spent an hour and a half in a traffic jam due to maintenance of public lighting.

That was the day the idea of creating a post with simpler and faster maintenance arose. A project was presented as the work for conclusion of his Industrial Design course, in 1998. From then on, the idea and the prototype evolved until, in 2005, a business plan was approved in the UFRJ incubator.

In 10 years, investment has already exceeded 1.5 million Brazilian reais (US\$ 940,000). Today each totem costs on average 9,600 reais (US\$ 6,000), but the price is dropping. "We are always negotiating with suppliers of raw materials. For export, the simple model may cost up to 20% less due to tax reductions on the productive chain," pointed out the businessman.

Service

ZIPlux

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Anba