



Photos by Juan Carlo, Ventura County Star

Andy Sreden, CEO of Premium Quality Lighting in Simi Valley, sells LED lights to homeowners and companies throughout the world to help them cut their lighting bills. Sreden started his business selling light bulbs door to door.

## BRIGHT FUTURE

### ■ Lighting Company hits 25-year mark

By Stephanie Hoops  
shoops@vcstar.com  
805-437-0265

A celebration is being planned at Premium Quality Lighting in an office complex not far from Rancho Simi Community Park.

“We started out in my garage and we’ve made it 25 years,” says Andy Sreden, founder of the lighting developer and distributor.

Sreden, 49, sits behind a large desk, having agreed to discuss the light bulb company he started April 15, 1989. He leans forward on his elbows. Photos of his wife and two college-aged children are on a shelf behind him.

He explains that his entrepreneurial inclinations came about in Granada Hills where he grew up watching his father work a vending machine business. Just out of high school, Sreden took a job selling light bulbs and that sparked his passion for the lighting



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industry. He didn't go to college. He did, however, manage to buy his first house at age 19, "on my own with no co-signer," he points out.

Premium Quality Lighting, also known as PQL Inc., moved to Simi Valley shortly after an initial launch in Granada Hills. He started by selling door-to-door with the help of his then-pregnant wife, who packed the bulbs for him in their garage. Sreden is clearly not eager to discuss how it is his business got to where it is and repeatedly steers the conversation to the technicalities of light bulbs and the novel changes that are thrilling him.

"It's exciting because it's a product that everybody needs," he says.

On his office wall hangs a signed photograph of Texas Rangers baseball player Nolan Ryan pitching a game with blood running down his face, dripping onto his uniform.

"Do you know the story? The ball hit him in the face and he didn't pause. He just went off to the next pitch and when the medics came out he just gave him one of these," Sreden says, gesturing.

What is the significance of the photo?

"Competitiveness," he says.

"Fight for what you want."

PQL's customers include the Navy, government facilities, school districts, cities and restaurants. He also does a great deal of work with pet supply companies.

"We make the heat lamps for reptiles and iguanas and all kinds of specialty applications," he says.



Sreden sells LED lights to help homeowners and businesses cut their lighting bills. In his Simi Valley warehouse all his overhead lights are LEDs that use less power and are on sensors.

At the Simi Valley headquarters, roughly 30 employees are on staff. Another 20 work in other parts of the United States, including distribution centers in New Jersey and Kansas City.

The Simi Valley office is inside a 60,000-square-foot building that Sreden owns and leases to the corporations, which he also owns. Billing, inventory and a distribution warehouse are housed there. Staffers also develop products, sending design specifications to manufacturers in other parts of the world.

During a tour of the facility, Sreden opens a door to a darkened storage area, which he says is 12,000 square feet that's being converted into more office space.

"We've been on a very strong growth mode over the last few years," he says. "The whole industry is changing due to the energy efficient lighting products and the LED"

Energy-saving LED (light-emitting diode) lights produce

more light per watt than incandescent lights and last on average 10 times longer, making them environmentally friendly and cost effective, according to Massachusetts Institute of Technology research.

PQL began selling LED lights about five years ago and that business has been picking up ever since, Sreden says.

"The last 12 months have been our largest growth in LED," he says.

The market's strength is due in large part to the cost savings and rebates they're able to obtain for customers.

For example, PQL was able to get government and utility rebates a few years ago, when it retrofitted the lighting in a large Phoenix office building and garage for Younan Properties Inc., a Woodland Hills commercial real estate company.

"We were able to expend very little dollars out of our pocket because of the rebates," said Denise Davis, Younan's vice president of

marketing and communications. “Those are the kind of programs that I wouldn’t necessarily know about, but they do because that’s their business to know what’s going on.”

Sreden expects that for this year the company’s LED earnings will be five to six times more than they were in 2013. He won’t divulge revenue figures, however, saying it’s a privately-held company and he doesn’t want his competitors to know. It’s fair to call PQL a “multimillion dollar” business, he says.

Continuing a tour of the Simi Valley facility, Sreden points out energy-efficient lighting installations, a bell that is rung when \$15,000 orders come in, and

RIGHT: Tony Gonzaga in the packaging department at Premium Quality Lighting in Simi Valley ships out a customer’s order.

introduces employees sitting behind desks and working in the warehouse.

“It’s fun. Everybody likes what they do,” says executive assistant Stephanie Kaplanek.

Looking back on the last two decades, Sreden has learned his business is “a numbers game.” He’s also learned that the attitude from the top trickles down and impacts attitudes throughout the company, and that relationships are a key to success.

“You have to build good relationships and follow through with what you promise and what you say,” he says. “You can always



get the business, but if you don’t build the relationship you’re not going to get the repeat business. If you don’t do what you say you’re going to do, or the product doesn’t perform like you say it’s going to, they’re not going to come back.”

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