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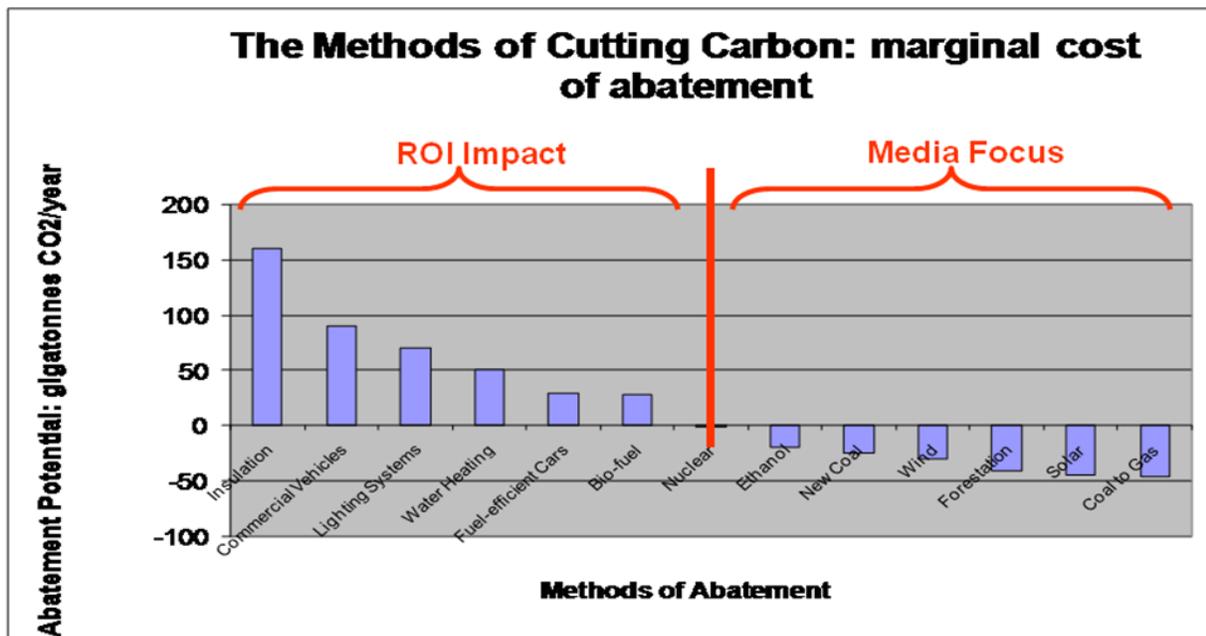
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**Working smarter:  
NCS lighting retrofits make it practical and profitable for businesses to green up**

Our buildings are the biggest consumers of energy by far. Of the average building's total energy use, lighting consumes 30 to 40 percent.

Along with insulation, efficient lighting systems are at the top of the payback scale for carbon abatement potential. This is a dual payback, offering near-maximum return on investment and greatest environmental benefit.

Yet energy conservation measures like lighting seem to have become overly simplified—to just changing bulbs—or they have gone off the public's radar screen entirely. The media tends to focus on renewable energies like solar, wind and alternative fuels, which are in fact at the bottom end of the payback scale. This gives disproportionate attention to costlier solutions with



Source: Vattenfall Utility Research, Sweden (2007): billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year by 2030

lesser overall impact. Focusing on renewables also tends to favor new construction while ignoring the need to make our existing stock of buildings as efficient as possible.

Even groups like The American Solar Energy Society advocate energy conservation measures as an essential prerequisite to adopting renewable energy:

*“The American Solar Energy Society ([www.ases.org](http://www.ases.org)) strongly encourages making efficiency improvements [i.e., lighting retrofits] before installing renewables. By improving your energy efficiency, you reduce the size (and cost) of the renewable energy system needed...Improving your energy efficiency is the first and most important step toward adopting renewable energy.”* (February 2009)

Plymouth-based Noble Conservation Solutions provides the full spectrum of energy saving solutions, from retrofits to renewables. But lighting retrofits are perhaps the best short-term practical solution for the majority of businesses—those using existing buildings with older systems. Not only are lighting retrofits at the top of the payback scale, they are also relatively easy, which makes them a practical first step for most businesses.

It is also a matter of timing, since tax incentives and rebates being offered now can save businesses up to 60% of their project costs and accelerate savings.

### **Case Study: Ratner Steel**

Steve Gottlieb, VP at Ratner Steel in Roseville, MN, said the lighting retrofit his company did with Noble Conservation Solutions was “seamless.”

“By that I mean once we had an agreement, it got done. We just signed and they took care of everything. I didn’t need to call and check up on anything. They did the work on time and as promised. They handled all the paperwork and financing. We did nothing—except sign the agreement.”

Gottlieb said NCS made the decision easy for him to make. They made a very good case as to how his company would benefit and made it easy to understand.

Those benefits were:

- savings up to 50% on energy costs
- ROI in less than 2 years
- improved lighting intensity to enhance productivity and safety
- reduced energy consumption to benefit the environment
- timeliness, to get in on rebates and incentives being offered now

The retrofit project replaced several hundred old metal halide fixtures with new high-efficiency fluorescent ones. NCS worked around the company’s production schedule and also removed the old lighting material for recycling under its no-landfill disposal policy.

The benefits of the retrofit were immediately apparent in reduced energy bills. Because the company expanded its space at the same time the lighting project was undertaken, exact rates of savings are not available. Yet Gottlieb predicted the return on investment will easily occur within the two years promised.

Reducing the company's carbon footprint is also important at Ratner Steel.

"It's great to do this for the environment," said Gottlieb. "We would use NCS again if we had another project. Our landlord heard about it and came by, looking for information. He was interested in doing similar projects in his other warehouses."

Ratner Steel uses 135,000 square feet of space in a 500,000 square foot warehouse building. They process large coils of steel into flat sheets made to order for other area industries.

The company's plant manager, Jim Kidwell, assessed the improvement in lighting quality resulting from the retrofit.

"It's like night and day. It was like a dungeon before in some areas," he said. "The new lighting has created a much better work environment." From a quality and safety standpoint, he said it has become a lot easier to inspect material and avoid hazards.

### **NCS' unique business model**

Lev Buslovich, COO at NCS, said that the client's perception of "seamlessness" is the result of a unique business model.

"We bring together the green collar, the white collar and the blue collar, so to speak," said Buslovich. The green collar refers to researching and advising on the best solution for each client. The white collar refers to technical and design expertise, while the blue collar handles installation and maintenance. Cost-savings is at the center of the model.

While most green businesses are fragmented, according to Buslovich, NCS brings all these functions together for the client, so they only need work with one company to get the job done. This model is a result of NCS' unique leadership and vision, "Saving your money and our planet."

Co-founder and COO Lev Buslovich is a U of MN Carlson School MBA senior lecturer in operations management and is a certified Master Black Belt in Lean Six Sigma. He was an executive with GE, Target and Carlson Companies prior to joining NCS.

Matt Noble, co-founder and CEO at NCS, has been in the energy Management and Lighting Retrofit fields for over 15 years. He has led national-scale, award-winning, multi-facility projects in universities, government institutions, office parks, warehouses, industrial and retail establishments and residential facilities.

## Case Study: Beth El Synagogue

Beth El Synagogue in St. Louis Park, MN could wait no longer to overhaul its unmanageable lighting system. The facility had been wasting 1.5 hours per day of staff time on lighting maintenance alone—changing bulbs, ordering and keeping track of 45 to 50 different types of light bulbs for its large, multi-use facility.

The facility-wide retrofit was nothing short of miraculous, according to head of maintenance Peggy Kerska. By standardizing their wide array of lighting fixtures to just a few types, they completely streamlined their maintenance requirements.

“It was a maintenance nightmare before,” said Kerska. The ability to standardize their fixtures and reduce maintenance time was one of the biggest payoffs Kerska cited. The other was energy savings.

“Excel Energy used to call us and tell us to power down,” said Kerska. “They said we were using way too much energy.” She explained that their facilities include a school and gym with lighting that drew an especially high amount of energy, as well as a very active roster of events that meant constant use of the facilities.

Key benefits for Beth El Synagogue were:

- maintenance and energy cost-savings of at least 30%
- standardized lighting fixtures and efficient, longer-life bulbs
- urgent need to reduce energy consumption
- solutions for their aging (1968), multi-use facility

Kerska said that their kilowatt usage has dropped by about a third after the lighting retrofit.

Another payoff: “The congregants are happy,” said Kerska. She said that conserving and recycling are near and dear to the younger generations in their community in particular, including the rabbis. Some of the young members even raised money to buy the new bulbs destined for the chapel as a Mitzvah project.

Another benefit of working with NCS was that they incorporated the synagogue’s emergency backup lighting system into the newly-retrofitted system. NCS also identified and replaced outdated wiring in the building as they installed the new fixtures.

“They didn’t want to ignore problems, which I really appreciated,” said Kerska.

She also appreciated NCS’ agreement to follow-up for 2 years after completion of the project, if the client found any issues that needed to be addressed. In one corridor, for example, the new lighting was so bright that every little structural flaw suddenly became visible. They found they needed to go with a less intense alternative.

Kerska advised others who are considering lighting retrofits to keep aesthetics in mind at the front end, since new energy-efficient lighting is usually much brighter. She also advised others to plan for some disruption, like any construction project, even though the crew worked around their schedule.

**For More Information, Contact:**  
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