2014 marks the 50th anniversary of Unicel Architectural. A big milestone for us!

Over these past 50 years, we’ve chalked up thousands of daylight and vision control projects in dozens of countries for all sorts of uses – hospitals, schools, museums, shopping centers, office buildings, and more. We’ve worked with thousands of talented architects who have inspired us with their vision and their designs.

We’ve learned a lot in 50 years. From architects, from builders, from building occupants and from our own ongoing research and development.

We’ve compiled a few highlights of these ‘learnings’ to share with you:
The absence of natural light upsets the body’s normal rhythms, which leads to hormonal imbalances, sleep disorders and mood disturbances. Quality daylight in workspaces increases levels of productivity and comfort. The effective use of daylighting makes a big difference in learning environments; it is proven to improve student performance and expedite learning. In healthcare environments, there is a direct correlation between patient moods and sunlight. Typically patients in properly sunlit rooms will be less stressed, less depressed and have shorter stays. We see more and more architects putting people first and creating buildings that blur the distinction between inside and out to incorporate more daylight.

We need daylight to thrive
We spend far too much on energy costs

Sunlight can be a powerful force and needs to be managed for optimal thermal and lighting results. Large amounts of energy can be saved by using well-designed lighting controls that can take advantage of the natural light available. A good daylighting design can save up to 75% of the energy used for electrical lighting in a building, for example. Fortunately, architects are moving towards greener design approaches to leverage the power of the sun in cold climates, and mitigate its impact in hotter climates.
Daylighting design uses sunlight as the primary source of illumination, and can have a measurable advantage over double and triple-glazed windows. Smart design techniques start by taking advantage of regional sun paths and planning how the building spaces will be used, their illumination requirements, the building positioning and local climate patterns. We see more architects treating skylights or top lighting as light fixtures as these admit more light per unit area than windows and can distribute it more evenly over a designated space. In addition, they are increasingly treating electrical light as a supplement to daylight – not the other way around. We are also seeing a greater move toward adjustable daylight management that allows for sunlight filters and controls.
We are becoming increasingly aware of privacy issues both digital and physical in our personal and professional environments. We seek it, value it and protect it. In our homes, we want to see out, but not be seen. In healthcare facilities, patients recuperate faster in more private settings. Privacy requirements can be dictated by facility uses (hospitals, correctional facilities, schools, office buildings and so forth), by cultural preferences or by personal sensitivities. Privacy is no longer an afterthought of window dressings – it is now becoming a fundamental design consideration.
Green building means using green building products

A few years ago green building was seen as the ‘right thing to do,’ and seemed limited to a progressive few designers and architects. Today, we see client and market demand driving green building. And green building is not just a design consideration; it’s more about the materials you use. Now that most municipalities have green building and sustainable community development plans, the most progressive are creating more concrete goals with actual performance requirements for buildings. Accordingly, architects want high performance building components. At the top of their list are building products that are highly energy efficient and sufficiently durable to withstand the test of time. Green products favor long-term value over short-term cost savings.
When we were advocating for more sustainable building practices and products many, many years ago, few were interested. Today, the world is changing for the better. Building and retrofit design is putting people, the environment and energy efficiencies first. We have come a long way in 50 years, and look forward to the next 50!

We would like to thank our extended community for these last 50 years – our global client base, the talented architects who have shared our vision, our distribution and sales partners, our top quality vendors and our committed team of employees.

We have learned so much from all of you and are grateful for your role in our ongoing success!