

Lighting the Path Forward

Language Level: Upper Intermediate / Advanced Low

Qian Su

Senior Lecturer, Chinese Studies at College of William & Mary

Abstract:

The Light Environment Company (LEC) was established in Beijing in 2004. Its main service is to use lights to add meaning and value to urban nightscapes. As the economy took off, the demand for demonstrating economic and cultural vitality in urban nighttime environments has increased from both local governments and private sectors. Mr. Hao, the founder and CEO of LEC has led LEC to its rapid development in the past decade. In 2019, the central government issued an executive order to regulate the market behavior of “excessive urban illumination” and ordered local governments to correct and rectify the practice of “vanity-projects”. LEC, along with the entire lighting design industry, was hit hard. Mr. Hao needs to reposition LEC, find new marketing strategies, and communicate LEC’s core value and strength effectively, under the premise of following the government policy.

Case (Chinese):

北京初夏的夜晚是美丽而有活力的，四环路两边数不清的万家灯火，鳞次栉比、彻夜通亮的办公大厦，城市干道上的滚滚车流，所有的一切都宣告着这是一座名副其实的“不夜城”。无数的财富在这里创造，无数的政令从这里发出，无数的故事在这里上演，这里是千百万人生活和奋斗的地方。

站在这其中一个窗口背后，一位沉静的中年人，默默地看着窗外被华灯妆点得绚丽多姿的北京城。密封的玻璃把城市的噪音挡在窗外，房间内一片宁静，只有中年人手里香烟头上升起袅袅的青烟，似乎给凝固的空间带来一丝动感。

这位文质彬彬的中年人就是在中国夜景照明行业小有名气的皓经理。作为光环境公司的创始人和总经理，用灯光装饰美丽的城市夜景是皓经理的工作，更是他的挚爱。但此时，他并无意欣赏这令人沉醉的北京夜景，而是在专注地思索着一个关乎公司未来的大问题。前两天新闻联播里播放的中央关于夜景照明行业的规定似乎还清晰地想在耳边，“整治景观亮化工程”，“过度

化”，“政绩工程”，“面子工程”… 皓经理叹了一口气，国家有了新的政策，光环境公司，这个自己投入了无数心血的照明公司，在经历了十几年的快速发展以后，下一步应该怎么走呢？

上个世纪九十年代，皓经理毕业于中国一所以建筑学专业闻名的著名学府，专攻建筑设计。毕业后，顺理成章地成为一名建筑师。建筑设计是一门综合性学科，优秀的建筑师需要具有综合素养。皓经理高超的专业知识，充分的创造力，深厚的中国传统文化修养，出色的组织和沟通能力，使他在建筑设计领域如鱼得水，很快就崭露头角。

二十一世纪初是一个到处充满机会的时代。城市快速发展，地方政府迫切需要改善城市环境，打造美丽繁荣的城市形象以吸引投资、开发旅游和促进经济发展。传统的功能性照明已不能满足城市建设的照明需要，高品质的夜间户外环境需要高品质的景观照明，因此，各个地方政府，不惜投入可观的亮化项目资金为自己的城市夜晚增光添色。与此同时，在全国范围内，无论是住宅区还是商业区，房地产业也爆发式地发展起来。地产商积极地通过景观照明为所开发的住宅区，商场，商业街提高吸引力。建筑设计出身的专业敏感度使皓经理注意到新的形势下，在以往的城市规划和建筑设计基础之上，夜景照明会是一个新兴的巨大市场。本着这个信念，2004年，他果断地做出了一个重要的职业决定，注册了光环境公司，从一名建筑师变身转型成为一家照明公司的总经理。

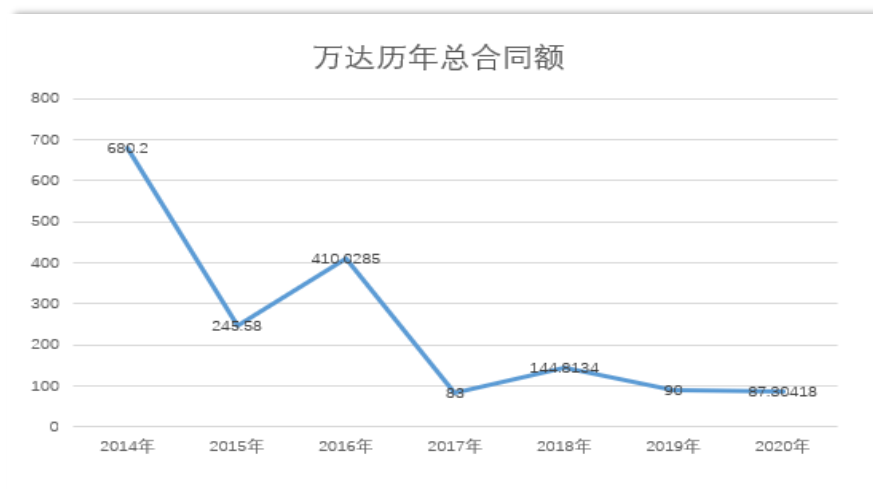
皓经理的公司经营理念是不必一味追求扩大公司规模或者完全以盈利为目的，而是力求在专业上精益求精，为每个客户提供最优秀、个性化的服务。和很多创业公司一样，光环境公司的发展过程经历了各种高低起伏。在头几年的艰难探索和尝试之后，公司于2009年前后迎来了发展的黄金时刻。凭借着皓经理以及公司设计团队超强的建筑设计背景和专业能力，出色的技术优势，丰富的经验值，优秀的服务，光环境公司赢得了越来越多客户的信任。公司在照明业界享有极好的口碑，并且不需要大力的市场推销，仅靠着行业内的口耳相传就建立了稳固的客户群。

公司的业务有两个主要来源：地方政府和房地产公司。光环境公司在中国很多一线城市，如杭州，重庆，广东都有十分成功的项目。尤其在近年来很多中国一线城市承办了一些高规格的国际会议，因此对承办城市的夜景要求很高。一线城市的夜景照明发展对许多中、小型城市起到了带动和示范作用。与此同时，房地产业的发展使地产公司，如著名的万达公司，注意到夜景照明对其商业综合体的价值。在2009年，光环境公司成功入选万达的供方库，这样就有了充足稳定的客户源。万达公司这样的行业翘楚在夜景照明方面的成功，无疑对其他的地产公司有带领和示范作用。

“过去的好时光…” 依然站在窗前的皓经理喃喃自语地说。夜已经很深了，他并没有一点儿倦意。看着窗外美丽的北京夜景，他不禁想起了公司的第一个重要照明项目，那是多年前在杭州做的。“上有天堂，下有苏杭”，杭州是每个中国人心中的人间天堂。对皓经理而言，杭州项目确实体现了他的审美理念和对夜景照明功能的认识：用恰到好处的灯光充分渲染出杭州西湖这个特定空间的特色，营造出一种古雅的氛围，使人们享受这个空间的时候，也能感受和欣赏到这个空间的历史和文化底蕴。灯光使远处的山，近处的水，掩映有致的亭台楼阁，都在夜色中讲述着独一无二的杭州故事。灯光完美地把照明功能、人和自然连接一体，把城市的人文特色和环境特色从容不迫地呈现在人们眼前。



“当，当，当”墙上的自鸣钟在猝不及防地时候敲响，把皓经理的思绪从遥远的杭州带回当下。他吸了一口烟，又想起了中央最近下达的关于城市亮化管理的通知。通知指出，近年来，脱离实际、盲目兴建景观亮化设施，搞劳民伤财的“政绩工程”、“面子工程”，不仅造成国家财力和社会资源的浪费，而且助长弄虚作假、奢侈浪费的不良风气。在行业里摸爬滚打多年，皓经理完全理解这项通知的来由和合理性。建筑设计出身的他十分清楚，无论从经济效益，设计美感，还是环境保护各方面考虑，不符合城市特点的过度亮化都不可取。皓经理和光环境公司的设计团队长久以来，一向强调灯光景观应该与空间的历史文化和自然环境协调一致，在保护自然环境的基础上凸显人文特色，以通过光的手段，达成和表现人与环境的和谐共存。然而，过去几年城市照明行业的快速发展，使行业内部确实出现了鱼龙混杂的现象。有些照明公司为了追求经济利益，会盲目地把每个角落打亮，而一些客户，为了面子，一味以为照明就是越亮越好，越亮越体现繁荣。造成的结果就是人们对夜间照明的态度褒贬不一，有的甚至会抱怨城市的光污染。中央政府适时地提出了加强管理的通知。这个通知一经发出后，立刻导致很多地方政府和地产商紧缩对照明项目的投入，所有照明公司，包括光环境公司在内，无疑马上感到了压力，眼睁睁地看着项目的数量减少，规模变小，投资降低。



想到这些，皓经理的目光从窗外收回，落在办公桌上本月的财务报表上。报表上的数字自然不容乐观。深吸了一口气，皓经理对自己说“一定会有办法的”。灯光不仅是现代生活空间不可缺少的元素，即使是中国传统的诗情画意，也永远被或温柔或绚烂的灯光点亮。“去年元夜时，花市灯如昼”，皓经理想起这句自己深爱的古老诗句，不禁莞尔。“灯文化”是中国传统文化的一部分，灯光象征着和谐，安宁和繁荣，中国人对灯光的热爱不会轻易丢失，而且他有信心，这个自己亲手一步一步建立起来的光环境公司是一个注重保持人与环境和谐互动，对保护自然环境和传统文化有社会责任感的公司。现在要做的就是让更多的用户更了解光环境公司，了解公司的价值和能力，可是，到底应该怎么才能做到这些呢？

Case (English):

The early summer night of Beijing is beautiful and full of life. With thousands of lights on both sides of the Fourth Ring Road, rows upon rows of bright office buildings, and busy traffic that never seems to stop, Beijing is veritably “the city that never sleeps.” In this city, tremendous wealth is being created, countless decrees are being issued, and numerous stories are being written; this is a place where millions of people live and struggle.

Standing behind one of these windows in a big office building, a middle-aged man is quietly looking at the beautifully decorated Beijing cityscape outside. The sealed glass blocks out the noise of the city, and the room is quiet. Only the smoke from the cigarette in his hand seems to bring a touch of movement to the stillness in the space.

This well-groomed middle-aged man is Mr. Hao, a well-known figure in China's nightscape lighting industry. As the founder and CEO of the Light Environment Company (LEC), Mr. Hao's job and passion are to beautify a city's nighttime environment with lights. But at this moment, he isn't looking to appreciate the intoxicating beautiful night view of Beijing. Instead, he is concentrating on a big issue concerning his company's future. The central government's new executive order about the lighting industry broadcasted in the state-run news channel rings clear in his ears, "correct and rectify landscape lighting industry", "excessive",

"achievement project", "vanity-project"... Mr. Hao let out a soft sigh. The new executive order has cast an ominous dark cloud over the entire lighting design industry. What's the path forward for LEC, the company to which he has committed his heart and soul for the past decade?

In the 1990s, Mr. Hao graduated from a well-known Chinese university known for its prestigious School of Architecture, specializing in architectural design. After graduation, he followed a well-paved career path and became an architect. With his superb training and creativity, great understanding of Chinese tradition and culture, and excellent organizational and communicative skills, Mr. Hao has quickly distinguished himself in the field of architectural design.

The early 21st century was a golden era of growth in China. To attract investment, promote tourism, and promote economic development, many local governments urgently needed to improve the infrastructure and atmosphere of their cities. Traditional functional lighting is no longer sufficient. A nighttime environment that instills feelings of safety and enjoyment calls for high-quality lighting design. An aesthetically illuminated nightscape is like a city's shiny profile picture, proudly proclaiming the economic prosperity and cultural vitality of the city to all, including investors, visitors, residents, and high-ranking government officials.

While local governments were willing to invest considerably in lighting designs and projects, lighting is also in high demand in private sectors. During the same period, the real estate industry, being an important driver for the economy, has seen epic growth in both residential and commercial sectors. Real estate developers also actively started to use landscape lighting to increase the attractiveness of their residential areas, shopping malls, and commercial streets.

Mr. Hao keenly sensed the increasing demand for urban nightscapes from both the government and private sectors. His strong business acumen told him that, after urban planning and architectural design, lighting design has the potential to become the next big market. Confident that his background and connections in the field of architectural design would position him advantageously in the emerging lighting design market, Mr. Hao made an important career transition in 2004. He registered the Light Environment Company (LEC) and transitioned himself from an architect to the CEO of LEC.

Mr. Hao's business philosophy is not to pursue company expansion nor solely chase after money, but to strive for professional excellence and to provide each customer with the best personalized service. Like many startups, LEC has seen both good and bad days in its 17 years of growth. After the initial phase of trial and error, the company ushered in its greatest development around 2009. Mr. Hao and his 20-person design company have won the trust of many customers. LEC is known for its superior design, considerable experience, tremendous knowledge about the market, and excellent customer service. Without relying too much on marketing efforts, LEC has established a solid customer base through word of mouth in the field and a strong portfolio of projects completed over the years.

The company's clients come from two main sources: local governments and real estate developers. LEC had some very successful projects in tier one cities in China, such as Hangzhou, Chongqing, and Guangdong. In recent years, several big Chinese cities have hosted high-level international conferences. These host cities were motivated to use nightscapes to show the world their economic prowess and cultural wonders, and their success in doing so has attracted other small- and medium-sized cities to follow suit. Meanwhile, real estate developers, including the real estate giant, Wanda Company, have noticed that lighting adds value to environments important to people's daily lives, and they started to actively integrate lighting design into real estate development. In 2009, LEC was selected to Wanda Company's Lighting Design Supplier Repository. Establishing a strong connection with Wanda solidified and further expanded LEC's client base.

“Those were the good old days!” Mr. Hao thought to himself. Despite it being late, he didn’t feel tired at all. Looking at the Beijing’s beautiful nightscape outside, he couldn’t help but think about the company’s first important lighting project, which was done in Hangzhou many years ago.

As the old saying goes, "up above, there is heaven, and down below, there are Suzhou and Hangzhou." Hangzhou is a paradise on earth to every Chinese. To Mr. Hao, the Hangzhou project embodies his lighting design principles and showcases his understanding of the role that lighting plays in shaping an urban nightscape. This role is to fully render the characteristics of a specific space - and in this case, the West Lake in Hangzhou - in order to create a quaint atmosphere that allows people to appreciate the space in its historical and cultural context. The mountains in the distance, the water in the vicinity, the pavilions, and towers in the shadows, all enhanced by lighting, tell the unique story of Hangzhou at night. Lighting intimately connects people and environment in such a way that the humanistic and environmental characteristics of the space are calmly and confidently presented before people's eyes.

The sudden chime of the clock on the wall caught Mr. Hao off-guard, brought his thoughts back from the beautiful Hangzhou in memory to the present. He took a puff of his cigarette and remembered the executive order on correction and rectification of urban lighting projects recently issued by the central government. The order points out that in recent years, many poorly-designed landscape lighting projects are "achievement projects" and "vanity projects" that not only hurt taxpayers by wasting financial and social resources, but also contribute to the prevalence of fraud and corruption.

Having been in the industry for many years, Mr. Hao fully understands where this executive order came from. As a professional architect, he knows very well that, without considering characteristics of a space, financial implications, and environmental safeguards, simply lighting up every corner of a space is never a good idea. Mr. Hao and his design team at LEC have long been advocating that urban lighting should be coordinated with the historical, cultural, and natural environment of a space and be used as an effective way to enhance harmonious coexistence of people and environment.

However, in the past years, the demand for lighting was so great that some lighting companies and customers mindlessly brighten up every street and square in a city. Too much lighting has caused many problems, such as wastefulness, grievance from residents, light pollution, and corruption. To better control the lighting industry, the central government has issued the order urging local governments and private sectors to manage the industry more effectively. This order immediately caused many local governments to constrict investments in lighting projects, which directly led to a reduction in the number and scale of projects for all lighting companies, LEC included.

Mr. Hao took his gaze back from the window, and his eyes fell on the monthly financial report on his desk. The figures in the report are not pleasant. Taking a deep breath, he said to himself, “there must be a way...”

Lighting is not only an indispensable element in modern living space, but Light culture is also a part of the Chinese traditional culture. Light symbolizes harmony, peace, and prosperity. "At the night of last year’s Lantern Festival, the Flower Market lights shine like the day." Remembering these lines of his favorite poem brought a faint smile to Mr. Hao’s face. Despite of the challenges, Mr. Hao has confidence in his company and its future. LEC has committed, and will continue to commit itself, to protecting natural environment, cultural traditions, and maintaining the harmonious interaction between people and the environment. What he needs to do now is to let people know LEC better and know the company’s values and strengths better. But how to do that?

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the culture concepts of “face” and “vanity project”, and how they affect business activities.
- Discuss and analyze the relationship between government and business organizations.
- Understand the industry of urban lighting design and its development of in China.
- Acquire good command of vocabulary and grammatical structures to describe the service and product of the business.
- Propose a solution to the challenge that the company is facing. Help the company to reposition and highlight its core value and competence.

Lesson Plan:

Day	In-class work and homework	Materials needed
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Intro/Warm-up Guide students to think about lighting, its functions, and urban nightscape.<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ What is lighting design?✓ What are the functions of lighting?✓ What does LEC do?▪ 案件内容第一部分<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 光环境公司和城市夜景照明产业的起步和发展▪ HW<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Listen to audio interview_part two✓ Watch the video: 杜子建：面子是什么？	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ LEC project samples✓ Video 中国十一座城市美丽夜景✓ Audio interview part one✓ The Case description✓ Vocabulary List 1

2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vocabulary Quiz ▪ 案件内容第二部分 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 光环境公司面临的困难和挑战 ▪ 关于面子的讨论 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 面子是什么? ✓ 人的面子 ✓ 城市的面子 ✓ 城市管理者的面子 ▪ HW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Read the articles 官员为什么热表面子工程? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Audio interview part two ✓ The Case description ✓ Video: 杜子明：面子是什么? ✓ Vocabulary List 2
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reading Comprehension Quiz ▪ 关于面子和面子工程的讨论 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 什么是面子工程? 面子工程有什么特点? ✓ 面子工程盛行的根本原因 ✓ 面子工程对老百姓生活的影响 ▪ HW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prepare an example to show the dynamic relationship between government and business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Article: 官员为什么热衷面子工程? ✓ 政绩工程 image
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 政府与企业之间的关系第一部分 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students report their examples to show the dynamic relationship between government and business. ▪ HW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Study 中央《关于整治“景观亮化工程”过度化等“政绩工程”、“面子工程”问题的通知》 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students' own research

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 政府与企业之间的关系第二部分 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 中央文件翻译练习 ▪ HW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Work in teams to prepare a presentation on solutions to the LEC's challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Article: 中央“不忘初心、牢记使命”主题教育领导小组印发《关于整治“景观亮化工程”过度化等“政绩工程”、“面子工程”问题的通知》 ✓ Vocabulary List 3
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Solutions to the challenge that LEC is facing. ▪ HW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evaluate the solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recording students' presentations.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group evaluation of the solutions presented ▪ Write a memo to the CEO of LEC ▪ HW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Finish the memo to the CEO of LEC ✓ Record reflections of the case. 	

Tasks / Assessments:

1. Comprehension and vocabulary quizzes on the case
2. Individual report on the relationship between government and business
3. Group presentation on solutions to the challenge that company is facing
4. Memo to the CEO of the company
5. Recording of students' reflection of the case
6. In-class discussions

All case files are available here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y2dem211dyqa5vq/AACxk-f-warenmIvGiHFdC8Na?dl=0>