



ADVANCES IN ROLLER SYSTEMS

LINKED SYSTEM AND FINGERTIP OPERATION

ROLLER BLINDS ARE BECOMING LIGHTER TO OPERATE AND EASIER TO INSTALL AS SUPPLIERS COMPETE TO OFFER THE BEST SOLUTIONS FOR THIS INDUSTRY SECTOR. DAWN ADAMS REPORTS.

The architectural trend for larger windows is driving innovation among suppliers keen to enable easy use of the increasingly larger or linked roller blinds. Some suggest a fingertip control while others point to a lightweight action suitable for the elderly or those with arthritis.

Fine-tuning of product is ensuring roller blinds don't shoot up when activated but rather rise slowly and stop at predetermined points. Other suppliers are finding solutions that don't require cords, eliminating the need to comply with safety regulations for corded window coverings.

Notable is increased interest in cassette systems for shift workers or home theatres and recognition of the need for rollers to be capable of integrating with motorisation options.

Toso Australia has introduced a special linked system as part of its Mytec offering. Managing director Malcolm Young confirms that two blinds can now be linked to five metres or three blinds to four-and-a-half metres. "A new and improved spring allows these blinds to go up and down as lightly as a smaller blind," he says. "A five-metre blind feels like a one-metre blind."

Young also points out the cost advantage, that less hardware is required because of the linking option. "We can now cover a window expanse of five metres and only need one chain to operate the blinds, which brings the hardware cost down dramatically," he says. "The other big advantage is that you only need to pull the chain a metre for the blind to go up by 1.7 metres. That's great for elderly people or those with arthritis who might not have the strength otherwise required to pull the blind up." Young suggests the chain operation is so light that it can be operated by simply placing fingertips on it.

He highlights how the firm has the opportunity to make suggestions for new products with its supplier Mytec. "In Japan, there is not much need for a linked system but we told them that they would be in demand in Australia," he says. "Similarly, we asked for the plastic chain to be made in stainless steel instead."

And the company is already making plans for new product innovations for 2013. "In the new year, we are looking at having a blind that is attached to brackets on a set bar," he says. "This makes it a lot easier for installation. You've already installed the blind on the bar and then, you attach the bar to the roof."

STRONG LIFTING CAPACITY

Auto-Slow is a Rolution spring loaded blind with a top limit that rises slowly rather than shooting up, according to JAI Products national sales manager Nathan Horner. "It's proving quite popular," Horner says, claiming there is industry interest in options that do not have cords. As a result, businesses are not required to address the safety issues that are regulated when corded window coverings are installed.

Also building interest since their release about a year ago are Rolution's Spring Power and Ultra Spring Power chain mechanisms. These blinds systems are capable of pulling up an 8 metre wide by 2.4 metre drop blind. "That's bigger than most other mechanism on the market can lift," Horner says. "It's been out a year now and we're starting to see quite a pick-up in sales. Rolution is different from anything else on the market. It has more options than standard mechanisms."

JAI Products has exclusive rights to Rolution in Australia and New Zealand.

GLOBAL INPUT FOR NEW HD SYSTEM

The global Hunter Douglas group was involved in developing the recently released Components Quantum Roller Blind Hardware system, introduced into Australia in August. With a focus on design, functionality and smooth, reliable operation, the system was designed and engineered by Hunter Douglas Worldwide.

The research and development was undertaken in Australia, Germany and Belgium, while production of the system is completed in Europe and Asia. The system has already been released in Germany, the US, Austria, France, Holland, The Netherlands, Spain and the Middle East.

Describing Quantum as the next evolution in roller blind hardware, the firm points out all the brackets are universal, ensuring incorrect components are not an issue for installation. The universal 38mm and 55mm brackets also assist with reducing inventory.

Hunter Douglas anticipates strong sales in the next 12 months, suggesting its new hardware system perfectly complements its fabric collection with more than 200 options to choose from.

A ONE-TOUCH SYSTEM

Australia leads the world in roller blind hardware technology, according to Blindware director Grant Norton. "The way we make roller blinds is more sophisticated in the high volume market than in the US and Europe," he says.

Norton suggests most recent developments have been about improvements and refining the product.

For example, he points to the one touch system with a clutch mechanism rather than a pull chain enabling a controlled speed and stops at pre-determined points. "The cost of technology is also more accessible, building consumer interest in the product," he says.

The RollEase SL-20 clutch is used for blinds that are 2.3 to 3.1 metres wide," he says. "We're also working at developing a broader range of options for use for multi-linked blinds. We've extended our bracket range to provide links for fascia and cassette systems which is quite unusual."

Norton points to cassette systems as very popular in the current market assisted by the mining industry which is selecting this option for shift workers who need a complete blackout to sleep during the day. "They want a side channel cassette system," he says. And he also credits the home theatre market with boosting this sector in the past five to eight years.

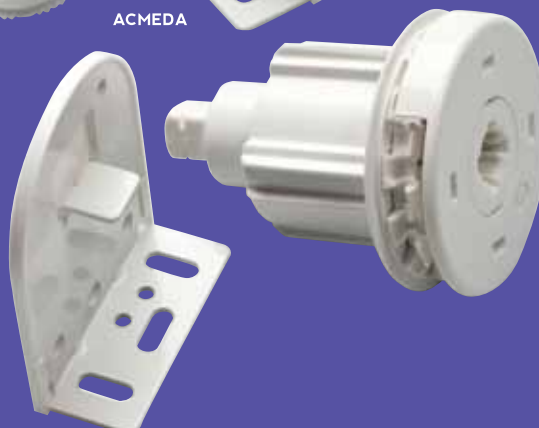
Norton notes the importance of roller blinds being able to integrate with motorisation. "This is very important; as prices come down, the motor volumes will go up and the hardware needs to be fully compatible," he says.



TOSO



ACMEDA



JAI PRODUCTS

A UNIVERSAL SYSTEM

Acmeda revamped its roller blind range this year and changed its presentation to ensure the industry can more easily identify the different systems. Its hardware solutions are now made up of Small, Medium, Large and Extreme systems with a variety of control mechanisms. They include chain control, spring operated, motorised and crank gear control.

Launched in September this year was the Extreme S100 System designed for larger or heavier shade applications. The company claims this system combines strength with style using robust hardware that is suitable for significantly heavier shading. Key features include three choices of tubes; 110mm, 130mm, or 160mm tube diameter, as well as the

ability to achieve spans of up to seven metres and drops of up to 10 metres. Powder coated with secure die cast brackets, this product features a heavy duty weight bar, UV stable hardware and a motorised or crank control with solutions for top/face and side fix applications.

The firm's new RB09 Chain Control System is being promoted as a next generation version that is stronger, smoother, quieter and faster compared to its predecessors. Featuring a screwless assembly with fewer components, the system is designed to reduce customer stock levels, decrease labour and cut its environmental impact.

With a slender design and small light gaps, the RB09 also features advanced snap-lock booster fitment, new two piece snap-lock winder assembly, high polish finish and a 10mm idler extension to correct incorrectly measured areas.

A feature of all Acmeda roller systems is Easy-Lock, allowing one-step snap lock blind installation.



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