

SMARTER THAN EVER: Window Blind Technologies

By Jackie Benton

Photography courtesy of Texas Sun & Shade

Our world is becoming smarter every day as our smartphones' capabilities evolve, making them an integral part of our daily lives. So, it shouldn't come as a surprise that they can also help us brighten our homes — literally — by controlling our window blinds.

“Most all of our customers have smartphones as well as smart home devices, so why not get the ultimate benefit and have them talk to one another?” asks Tracey Hopkins with Austintatious Blinds. “In fact, many of these devices and their connectivity and ease of use is literally commanding and dictating what products are being developed and launched in today’s market.”

Gone are the days when homeowners had to pick a particular smart home system, and stay within the tech confines of that system, says Hopkins. “The new technology that is now dictating these products is ultimately making it not only much more affordable but also creating a truly smart home that can talk to many devices.”

That ease of use is integral to the homeowner’s experience when using technology to control their window treatments, or anything else in their home for that matter, says Ben Skoldeberg, owner of Texas Sun & Shade. “Homeowners can use their remote control applications like a mobile app to control their motorized shades whether they’re at home or away. Motorized window coverings can integrate with almost all home automation brands available.”

Hopkins says convenience and efficiency is at the heart of using smart technology for window coverings, and a motorized covering can actually be more efficient than a hand-operated one.

“Window coverings can now operate based on key parameters that you put in place for your home or office. For instance, Hunter Douglas PowerView window coverings can be manipulated automatically by connecting to local weather or web-based thermostats, or automatically operates according to the time of day,” Hopkins explains. “This creates a world



of efficiencies that we have never had before. If a room is getting hot due to solar heat gain through the windows, instead of having to turn on the air conditioner and lower all of your shades manually, you can simply create a command for the shades to lower when the room reaches a certain temperature, versus losing more energy through your windows.”

Using smart technologies to control window coverings isn’t just for tech-savvy Millennials — it has a broad appeal for all ages, especially homes with young children and pets. Everyone wants safety, and dangling cords from window coverings have been identified as one of the top strangulation hazards. And of course, for those with mobility issues, the ease of use afforded by smart technology to change the room’s lighting is a godsend.

“Motorized and cord-free window coverings are for everyone: from a cautious parent concerned with child safety to others who want ease of use to the tech-savvy user who wants to integrate the latest technologies into their home,” says Skoldeberg.

As far as styles for motorized window coverings, the selection has to be limited in designs, right? Actually, nothing could be further from the truth, says Skoldeberg.

“We have many traditional style window coverings available, including roller shades, roman shades and bottom-up shades. These are all now commonly available in a motorized operation, allowing a homeowner to have fully functioning treatments even in the most hard-to-reach applications,” Skoldeberg says. “Everything from solar screens to room darkening shades are available to accentuate interior design and be fully functional at the touch of a button, or even voice control.”

As for those who still believe that their old-fashioned, hand-operated window blinds are still the way to go, Hopkins believes they should reconsider that notion. “These technologies and interfaces are only getting better and better. By purchasing products from good quality brands, you can ensure that the technology and style that you are purchasing is the latest and most innovative. The smartphones introduced several years ago were just the introduction. Now everywhere we look there is another smart device, ready to connect and make our life easier.” ♦

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