

MOTORIZATION

BY MATT UHL



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCREEN INNOVATIONS UNLESS NOTED.

The global smart window market was valued at **USD 3.88 billion** in **2019** and it is expected to reach **USD 6.09 billion** by **2025**, registering a **CAGR of 8.95 percent**, during the period of **2019-2025**. Homes are increasingly becoming equipped with many advanced automation systems and smart products. With these various blinds and window coverings, vendors are enhancing their offerings to offer connected and automated solutions to make window coverings smart. [ResearchandMarkets.com]



“

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— MATT UHL

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I'VE BEEN FOCUSED ON MOTORIZED WINDOW TREATMENTS FOR OVER 10 YEARS and when I'm asked into a project at an early enough stage, I know I'll be able to work with the architect, builder and interior designer so projects run smoothly and their vision is realized at the end of the day.

Our team at Gulf Coast Shades and Blinds – serving Pensacola, Florida and surrounding areas – specializes in motorization and we work with clients and designers to create beauty for windows and select the right treatment to express a home's personality.

On our initial meetings, we're really there to listen. Our belief is that every home or office has a story to tell. We want your space to be as elegant as possible and we understand that only the finest materials and products will ensure complete satisfaction. So as we listen, we begin to get a picture of what the design goals are and how we can provide solutions.

Most people are looking for one or more of the following when it comes to adding shades and blinds: privacy, blocking glare, blocking UV rays, and/or something that just looks great! If needed to fit a budget, some rooms like guest bedrooms we might suggest manual blinds, where more common spaces might have motorized treatments that tie into a whole house control system. After all, during the day we are harvesting the natural light and as the day progresses, we begin to blend that light with the illumination from today's LED lighting technologies. That entire process can be automated with the proper design and planning. >>

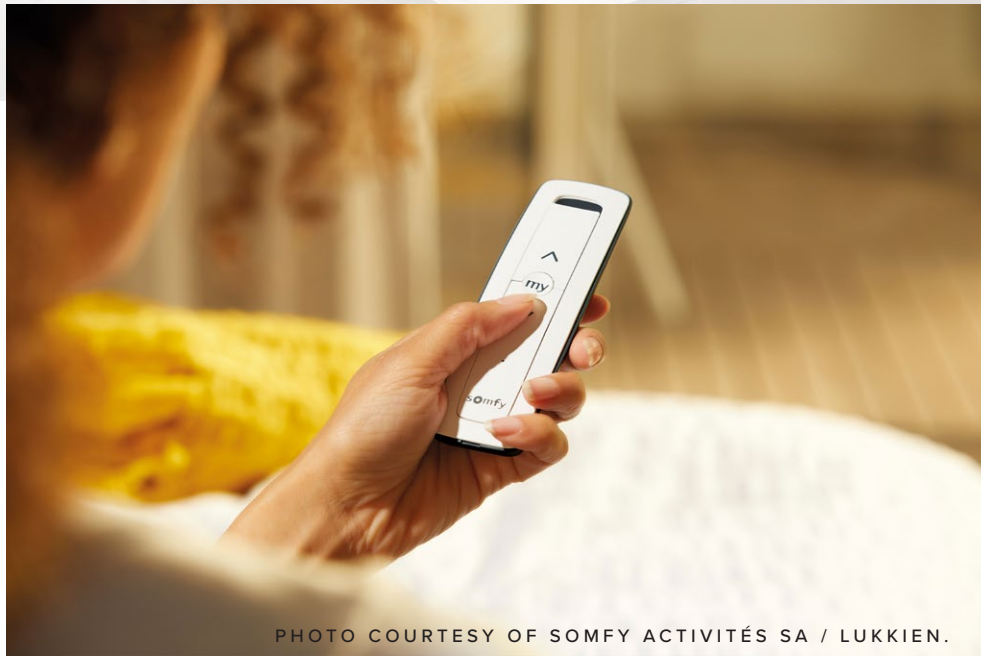


PHOTO COURTESY OF SOMFY ACTIVITÉS SA / LUKKIEN.

When we are discussing motorized roller shades with the designer, we start with width and height of the window and what type of fabric they have in mind. The height of the window and the fabric thickness determines the ultimate diameter of the roller shade that will fit up into a ceiling pocket. We need to make those calculations so we can inform the architect and builder before the project ever breaks ground.

Our go-to vendors for roller shades are Somfy and Screen Innovations (SI). Somfy is by far the world's largest provider of the motors that power today's shades and screens. We specify Somfy because they work and are very reliable. But beyond reliability, Somfy offers a wide range of motors for a variety of applications. Depending on the look we're going for, most designers today want to have the slimmest roller shade possible – the slimmer the design, the sleeker and more modern the look.



The other great thing about Somfy is their diversification. They offer products for shades, blinds, curtains, awnings, outdoor screens, pergolas – and they are smart and integrate with many of the largest smart home brands. Their motors will also be able to handle the weights and thicknesses of most fabrics.

SI shades run the gamut as far as textures, colors and utility – are we looking for privacy or UV/glare control? We have samples and demos set up in our by-appointment showroom where we can work with designers to get that perfect fabric for that perfect space.

What many designers already know is that transparent screen fabrics filter incoming light, reducing heat gain, glare and harmful UV rays. Endless combinations of color and openness factors are available so we can fine tune the look. But keep in mind that if you see out through a fabric by day, at night your neighbors can look back into your space! So for privacy we have the option of running multiple layers of material, or opting for room darkening fabrics that provide more privacy.

For aesthetics, we can offer a cassette where the roller is contained in a box assembly or have the roll exposed inside the window frame. For the stealthiest design, we can install the motorized roller shades into the ceiling and create a pocket slot for the shade to drop down through as it appears as if by magic.

Once the designer has weighed in and we've come up with our design, my conversations turn to the architect and centers around how we are going to physically place the shade housings into the ceiling itself. So we will deliver the width and height specifications along with the diameter of the roller to the architect so they can create the correct size of the pocket we need.

Then to wrap things up we have a conversation with the builder about how we are going to wire the house so we can power the windows that have automated treatments. Our company doesn't run wires on the project, so we work with an electrician to get our wires properly integrated into the project. We specify either CAT6 or 16/2 gauge wire and pre-

fer that the wire is terminated at the left side of the shade's motor interface. We like to keep everything regimented in our design so all of our team know what to expect when they show up to a job site.

We will personally go to the job site and talk with the electrician so we're both on the same page when it comes to wiring. It's that important. We also have to consider that all of the wire that is run is configured as "home-runs" – meaning that each window has an individual wire running back to the equipment room. So at the equipment closet, we have to calculate how many window treatments we can put on one plug, how many plugs we'll need, and how much space in the rack we need to accommodate all of the power panels required to power all the window treatments.

For outdoor treatments, the story is similar to what we've covered. We specify Somfy because it's reliable in outdoor environments. The only real difference is what type of screen material a designer will opt for. Again, SI has a wide portfolio of outdoor screen materials.

So I think you can see where getting our team in early is an advantage to all of the other trades. Considering motorized treatments after the project is underway creates so many headaches that many times it doesn't get the serious attention it deserves, because automating the process of natural light and privacy adds so much to any space.

final thoughts

For me, the future of motorized shading is the new SI Zigbee 3.0 motor by Somfy. Zigbee 3.0 is a wireless mesh network that provides a very reliable signal to have wireless control of many devices throughout the project. It is the most reliable RF signal if the network is set up properly. The benefit of using SI Zigbee roller shades is it doesn't matter if you use the wired power Zigbee or rechargeable battery power Zigbee roller shades, as they are both premium products and work together on the same network. This allows our team to provide premium solutions no matter if it is a new build or a retrofit project. We do recommend running wires for power when possible however.

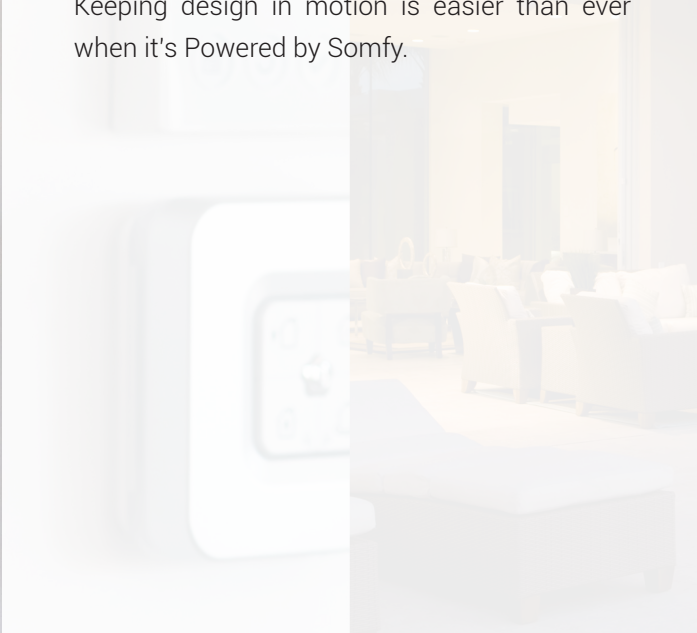
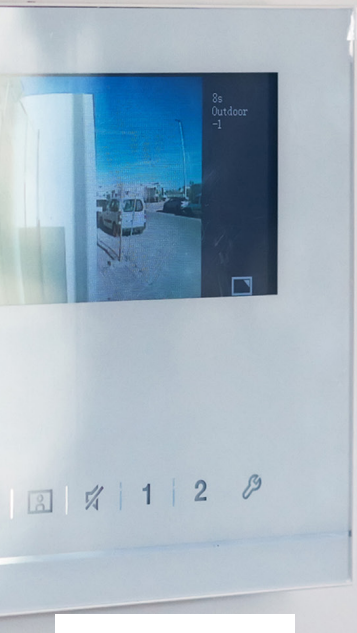




Collaboration In Motion.

We make motors that are smart, connected and proven. Our Powered by Somfy partners make shades, blinds, drapes, pergolas, screens and more. Working directly with control manufacturers, we've certified and validated our drivers for ease and assurance of connectivity. Helping you create environments that are dynamic, more accessible and entertaining.

Keeping design in motion is easier than ever when it's Powered by Somfy.



Certified and validated drivers that work with these third party automation systems:

Control4  **CRESTRON** **SAVANT** **ELAN**  **U-G**
...and more.

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