

CONGREGATE, COLLABORATE, INNOVATE



WHAT A WONDERFUL RECEPTION! HOW TO GET THE BEST FROM YOUR RECEPTION SPACE

Recent surveys have shown that more innovative companies are 5 times more likely than less innovative businesses to offer space that encourages collaboration. Collaboration is seen as essential to innovation. These 'chance encounters' can spark fresh ideas and problem solve in a way that wouldn't happen by simply sitting at a desk. Innovative Landlords are presenting new office space in a way to highlight these opportunities and attract new tenants.

The fact is that people do different things throughout the day and value having the choice to work from where-ever they feel is the most conducive environment to enable them to produce the best results. There is of course still a place for solo working. People need to be able to focus without distraction. The key is to provide a variety of working areas and together with a seamlessly mobile, connected environment. Reception areas, stair and lift lobbies, café areas and outdoor seating, complemented with ample WiFi and electrical charging points will do the job.

Take a look at your own reception. What does it say about your organisation? Is it somewhere that you walk through on your way to your desk or is it a place where you want to linger and meet clients and colleagues to exchange ideas. Most likely it is filled with pictures of your other offices, your staff or certificates and accolades collected along the way? Maybe there are a few potted plants dotted around together with an outdated copy of a local business magazine and Country Life?

By contrast, walk in to any hotel and the reception is buzzing with activity. People coming and going with many having impromptu or prearranged meetings. One hotel just off the M25 hosts so many such meetings that they have started charging for using the space. That highlights the value many place on a well located, comfortable and an inviting place to meet.

In the past receptions were designed to be impactful but ultimately, "efficient" spaces. Corporate shoulder pads if you will. They were places that spoke of a secure environment, of corporate standing and were largely seen as

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places to quickly move through on the way to other parts of the building. Even where large receptions existed, they were often not designed for anything other than a means of introducing light into deep space. These areas therefore have been considered as less valuable as workspace, not only by the organisations who use them but intrinsically by the landlords who run them, who charge them out at only half or nil rent, when in fact they are often as valuable, as the office space they support. So are landlords, as well as tenants, missing the opportunity to create added value?

The reception should be the embodiment of an organisation's brand. It should ignite interest well before entering the office. So what can be learned from retailers who are past masters in welcoming customers? Premium brands entice you into their emporiums of sleek simplicity well before you venture over their threshold. The windows radiate translucency and power; the elevation stands proud, creating a back-drop of theatre; years of research and consumer psychology have won and you have been enticed in!

office and collaborative working specialists and premium airport lounges including Emirates, have forged a vibrant proposition and have become vanguards of change.

These brands have re-modelled cold and sterile receptions into the 'third place'. A space to meet, graze and interact. These receptions are in no way a place to pass through, moreover they are spaces of vibrancy and life, they are spaces in which landlords can offer more to their tenants. In return the tenants derive value from these areas which complement and often substitute their office areas and thereby have an intrinsic or monetary value.

Free Wi-Fi is no longer an extra. It's a necessity. We expect to sign into a building on our smart device. We expect to receive a three dimensional experience. Pace and passion, music, fresh flowers, beautiful magazines and instant connectivity.

But let's not forget the human element. The value of a charismatic receptionist who engages with people easily and makes long term professional relationships which is invaluable. Research shows engagement aids retention. There has been a noticeable move away from the intimidating power desk manned by the uniformed security guard towards a softer, more enticing and engaging approach.

Security is important and we need to respect this, but can we work harder to find solutions which make it less intrusive? Discrete CCTV and re-programming existing lifts to make them smart avoids the need for barriers and security guards.

A reinvented and re-thought reception mitigates the need for a marketing suite as it can serve the same purpose. The communication of the opportunities your building or business offers can be heard loud and clear.

Why not supply great coffee and allow your space to become a destination of choice? The inference being that your building is their destination of choice. Is this not what you seek, to entice the new and retain the existing?

Simple tricks borrowed from great hotels where sumptuous smells are injected, finishes are selected that change the tone from crisp to calm, creating atmosphere and mood. Low level lighting and lamps to soften the space and create the essence of the home; eclectic furniture of subtle tones and textures are the way forward. Cafes or coffee machines are features of the modern reception accompanied by sofas for informal conversations and benches for plugging in your laptop and focusing on solo work.

The arrival experience has moved on from a place to be greeted to very much a place to meet, collaborate and innovate.



WeWork

YOUR RECEPTION AREA IS NO DIFFERENT

We live in a highly competitive, visual society which is judgmental and harsh, praising the good and condemning the poor. Business people often lack time and patience and make decisions about environments at the same speed they scan the web. Just two seconds is well-documented as being the time for deciding whether to engage with a website or move on. The treatment of your reception is no different.

Great environments are founded on excellent service. However, service is no longer a brand extension. Moreover, service is the emotional glue to your brand and brand expression. The notion that service is about people is outdated. Service is at the centre of great environments. Let us explain.

Service is about going the extra mile and creating options for the audience which engages with your space. Companies such as WeWork, the second generation serviced

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