

Re-think your reception area

10 key
recommendations
from international
hospitality experts

Based on
interviews
with

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International hotels

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Introduction

In the past two decades, the reception area has gone from being a kind of cosmetic afterthought to become a tangible expression of corporate identity, value and mission. Getting it right can make an enormous difference in your daily business and pave the way for future recognition and success.



While most managers today are aware of the pivotal role played by the reception area, effectively addressing this important factor can be tricky. It's easy to get lost in the process and to underestimate the many variables involved.

That's why we asked some of the most respected hospitality experts and reception managers in the world to give us their tips for building a great reception area. In this eBook, we've collected the best forward-thinking and proven hospitality practices to move your company into the twenty-first century, and boost your identity and brand value.

A brief look back...

In the popular TV series *Mad Men*, the business culture of the 1960s is explored through the changing fortunes of a New York advertising agency. As the show makes clear, power and success were frequently expressed by the size of the company's building and its often opulent decor. Yet, while things have changed considerably over the past fifty years, most reception areas around the world still look very much the same as those in the TV show.

...and forward

In the new century, it's not about fancy buildings and big armchairs anymore. Or at least not only. The twenty-first century workplace is all about people and—in order to win contracts and gain the respect of your peers, competitors and clients—it's essential to make the right first impression.

That's why you can't think of your reception area as just one more component in your building or office. If you make it a priority—a place that draws people in and makes them feel welcome—you'll find that, even in our increasingly mobile and nomadic world, people will choose to visit your workplace, which in turn leads to strong and lasting relationships.

01.

Define your DNA and build loyalty...

If the reception area is the tangible expression of your company's identity, the first thing you need to do is to be sure you know who you are. This may sound silly, but many businesses with strong potential fail because they never ask themselves two simple questions: "Who Am I?" and "Who Do I Want to Be?" Once you've clarified these two essential points, you'll know you're on the right path. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

Defining your identity can take time and sometimes requires input from a professional. Take as much time as you need: this is the foundation for your future.

Once your DNA is established, you can translate it into services, policies and behavior that match the culture and values of your company. This is how, ultimately, you will build loyalty for your brand.



Bernard Drion, Professor of Facility Management at NHTV (The Netherlands), Associate Partner at Hospitality Group and coauthor of *Workin' Wonderland*

Ideal hospitality depends on the culture and values and DNA of the company. Defining those and translating them into service is crucial to build loyalty to a company.

... and then aim for the stars.

In a world marked by fierce competition and continuous reinvention, to guarantee your survival you have to stand out from the crowd. Don't be afraid to venture off the beaten path and try new things. Build on the strategies and products you've used in the past, but don't be limited by them. Ask yourself what, among the things you do, distinguishes your company from its competitors. What makes your business special and unique? Then focus on becoming even more so.

02.

Hire the right people from the right places.

Last century was about the infrastructure. This one, it's all about the people. The right attitude makes everything else possible. It's not magic, but when the chemistry is right, everything else becomes easy. Seek out the brightest people, people who are motivated enough to make a difference.

Talent retention is probably your greatest challenge in re-shaping your reception area. Greater focus on the reception area has brought more attention to the hospitality industry. An ever-increasing number of reception managers come from the hotel business, and their expertise in guest-centered and tailored service is moving the sector forward.



Simon Pratt,
Managing Director, Portico

People are the trademark of outstanding hospitality. They are the reflection of the brand. Make sure (when you hire them) they have a great attitude and an engaging personality, that they take great pride in what they do. The rest you can train.



Michael Gray, Hyatt International General Manager for UK & Ireland

I know that industries will seek out hospitality school graduates in order to build their own level of corporate care. I could never understand why, when you are in a bank, no one ever uses your name or why there is never a bank manager standing in the lobby as we do (in the hotel industry). Our industry is not rocket science: you go far if you reach out to people.

03.

Create guest journeys.

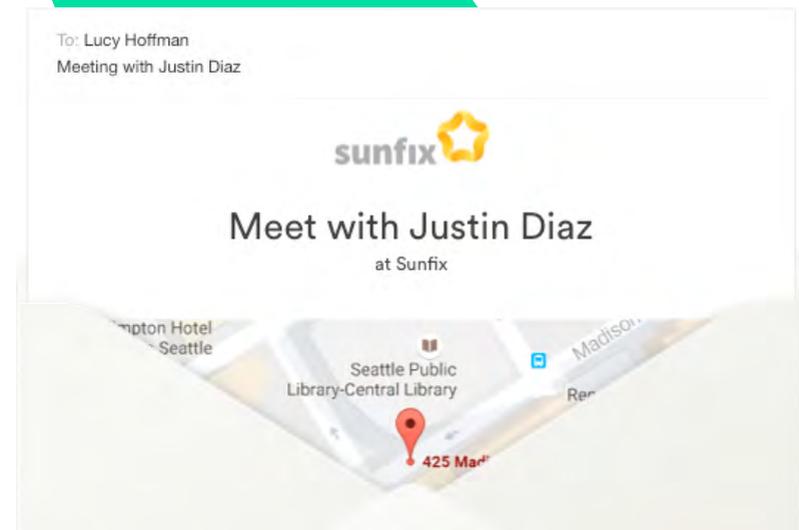
Unfortunately, too many managers make the mistake of thinking that one size fits all. They believe that because a model has been successful, it will be successful in any context. This is a serious error. Every visitor deserves a tailored journey. That is why it's important to create guest journeys based on different categories of visitors and guests—e.g., the arrogant new important customer, the enthusiastic vendor, the shy student, the delivery guy.

Identifying these personas allows you to focus on specific groups of people among your potential guests in order to better serve them. Such personas do exist in the real world and getting to know them puts you in a position to offer your guests unique and memorable experiences. Remember: First impressions are lasting, and they will remember this experience whenever they interact with your company.



Geert John van der Bruggen,
Manager, Corporate Real
Estate & Facilities at Astellas
Pharma Europe

It is hard for us to influence a meeting, but we can influence the way the guest comes in and goes out.



04.

Let your visitors help you find solutions that work.

The best way to know what's best for your visitors is to ask them. One of the simplest methods for keeping in touch with your guests is through regular, detailed surveys. Once you've created and identified different personas, involve them in finding solutions.

Organize workshops and focus groups and let people give their input regarding such things as design or new ideas you want to test. Don't be afraid of negative feedback. Dissatisfaction is a normal part of business, and it offers you the opportunity to improve your service and create a brighter future for your company. The way you deal with negativity says a lot about your ability to stay afloat despite the winds.



Michael Gray, Hyatt
International General Manager
for UK & Ireland

We get our best clients from incidents of customer dissatisfaction.



05.

Extend your definition of “guest.”

Most people tend to think that the term “guest” applies only to individuals who are not part of the company. Visitors, then, are always considered guests, but never valuable team members.

In terms of reception practices, we have found that the best results are achieved by extending this definition to everyone, both within and outside the company. If you provide the same care and attention to anticipating and satisfying the needs of all, you’ll quickly find yourself on the road to success.



Geert John van der Bruggen,
Manager, Corporate Real Estate &
Facilities at Astellas Pharma Europe



We consider everybody a guest. Employees are internal guests. We value perception above all, and that’s true for visitors, but also for employees: you want to impress external guests and at the same time to attract the best talents to work for you.



Zig Wu, Facilities Consultant,
Jacobs Engineering

Technology will play a critical role in the foreseeable future: it will help companies to become more efficient and more cost effective. Improving quality and reducing cost is possible: you need innovation.

06.

Recognize that technology, while essential, will never replace the human touch.

Technology is unquestionably one of the most important factors in our world. It's a major catalyst for change, and investing in IT is necessary to keep up with rapidly evolving business practices. But it's not the sole priority. Technology facilitates human interaction, but it can't and won't replace it. That's why, now and in the foreseeable future, it's that human touch that makes the difference in outstanding reception practices. A visitor might be able to check in from his smartphone, but if something goes wrong, it will still take a skilled reception manager to find a solution.

07.

Consult a specialist.

In the same way that you'd go to an orthopedist for a knee injury, you should engage a specialist to redesign your reception area. Ask yourself what kind of experience and space you are trying to create. An interior designer will work with you to bring your vision to life through technology, fragrances, flowers and art, creating the "wow factor" that will shape your visitors' first impressions. It's all about engaging the client and beginning a journey together.



Marc Goetz, General Manager,
Securitas Accueil France

The reception area is the first contact of a visitor with the company. Visually, it has to be a bright, well-lighted space, clean and accessible. All senses must be engaged: it has to smell good, be pleasant to the eyes, and you need to have a smiling, reassuring person to welcome you and guide you to your meeting.



William Poole-Wilson, Principal,
Pringle Brandon Perkins+Will

People tend to think that it's all about the money when actually it's about using industry standards for measuring success.

08.

Remember that money matters but in the end, people matter more.

Too often people explain their failure to realize their dreams with the same excuse: not enough money. ("If I could have spent more, it would have been perfect.") Similarly, managers with a large budget believe that a huge investment will always guarantee a successful result. They're both wrong. Money is important, but at the end of the day, it's about the people. You can spend a fortune on interior design and art, but if you don't have the right attitude, the best-trained people, and a genuine desire to engage with your clients and guests, it's highly unlikely that you'll achieve the result you want.

09.

Communicate. Effectively.

Communication is a very powerful tool—if you use it wisely. Displaying company policies and sending informative emails is important, but the best way to ensure a high-performing reception area (and company) is by involving your employees in the process. Making sure that they understand why you're doing what you're doing and why you need them to be engaged is the best way to gain their support and bring out their best.



William Poole-Wilson, Principal,
Pringle Brandon Perkins+Will

Why install a screen telling you how much energy you are consuming if you don't help people understand what it means.



Michael Gray, Hyatt International General
Manager for UK & Ireland

You go through life and you always see opportunities that could benefit your hotel or your company. This is right now one of the main challenges of the job: not leaving an opportunity untested.

10.

Never leave any opportunity untested or untried.

As in any business, it's crucial to keep your eyes open for new and innovative ideas. Rapidly developing technology creates endless opportunities and offers the chance to continually modify and adapt your strategies to best serve an evolving market.

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Bernard Drion, Professor of Facility Management at NHTV (The Netherlands), Associate Partner at Hospitality Group and coauthor of *Workin' Wonderland*



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Jean de Lauriston, Regional Director of Sales & Marketing, Warwick International Hotels



William Poole-Wilson, Principal, Pringle Brandon Perkins+Will



Simon Pratt, Managing Director, Portico



Hilde Vanhemelryck, Managing Partner, Eligio



Zig Wu, Facilities Consultant, Jacobs Engineering

At Proxyclick we want to have an impact on people's lives by creating millions of positive connections.

We wanted to do away with the frustrating and impersonal experience of going to business meetings.

So we designed a solution to transform the way people are welcomed to offices around the world, allowing everyone involved to connect with confidence. This is how we make the world a more positive place, one meeting at a time.

Find out more and get a free 30 day trial of Proxyclick here: www.proxyclick.com

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