



Design of reception areas

A GOOD RECEPTION

Worth the wait: five tips for contemporary reception areas

You don't have to be an expert at staging places or be acquainted with the art of hypnoaesthetics to appreciate that spaces follow a strategic dramaturgy and can be stage-managed. So we'd like to take this opportunity to invite you to discover why entrance areas in particular should be designed with a good eye for detail.

Inspired by our planning expert Carina Hölzer

Reception areas are important. They're responsible for that initial impression when someone first enters a building. And the design should be as good as possible. Why? Because ideally this is a place that reflects the identity and image of the company, or the whole organisation – like a business card or first eye contact. It can be used for strategic placement of brand or personality recognition triggers. Not only does design play a key role: interpersonal and sociological aspects are equally significant here.

1. First impressions count

In reception areas it's vital to appeal to all the senses – to ensure that people entering the building (including those who work there) are made to feel welcome. What's vital in order to achieve this? A friendly and inviting atmosphere. Cleanliness, freshness. Simplicity. The reception counter shouldn't seem like a rampart, creating distance. After all, the aim is to encourage dialogue here. So height and material quality play a significant role.

At the moment there's a trend for administrative buildings to mirror the design of hotel lobbies. A varied range of fittings comes across as more relaxed and informal, people meet each other while standing, they communicate at a higher level. Furniture for waiting areas and lounges is ideally functional and comfortable. But be careful: most visitors find a normal sitting height more comfortable physically because they don't have to get up out of deep armchairs when their counterpart is ready to receive them. In terms of style, furniture that matches the architectural form of the building is a good choice, as illustrated by our examples from the PURE and FLOW style collections.



Example of the FLOW style collection

It's well worth embracing the "Nature Priming" trend and using plants or natural experiences to make the first impression as sustainable and inspiring as possible. Art is also an appropriate way of styling a waiting area. Visitors are led into another world, elevating this actual place to a new plane and making it even stronger. That's effective – maybe not always consciously or unconsciously – but it's certainly inspiring and enriching. Another time-honoured option is for companies to decorate their foyers with artworks and installations designed specifically for that purpose – this contributes to a cultural discourse and underlines the company position.

2. The joy of arrival

Arrival doesn't start in the foyer. You begin to approach a building before that, and build a picture of the company's essence. Even at this point it's important to ensure clarity and a straightforward route, or to use plants consciously (gardens, a tree-lined avenue or façade greening). Pioneer of the experience economy Christian Mikunda tells us that nature priming helps us feel more relaxed. This makes us tolerate noise or stressful moments more easily.

Visitors who enter a building usually have a specific reason, an appointment. They have just completed a journey, sometimes lasting several hours. Where can they put luggage or clothing? Is there storage for these at reception? There needs to be enough space for wardrobe, cupboards or even a separate cloakroom for this purpose. Of course there must be toilets with washing facilities for visitors to freshen up! This might allow them a moment to relax just as they arrive.

3. Information and communication

In this era of digital communication it's a good idea to have a reception area with state-of-the-art technology. People like to while away their waiting time by using their digital devices (laptop, iPad or mobile phone). So visitors will certainly be delighted if there is wifi available, and logging in is as easy as possible. Are you also taking the opportunity to promote your company in the foyer? As well as actual members of staff, you could also provide TV screens or even collages / room installations (display cases etc.). Interactive solutions that invite visitors to find out more are appealing too. Have you ever thought about using humanoid robots? Some firms have already used Sophia, Pepper and co. successfully as reception assistants.

4. Hospitality: arrive as a guest ...

As well as a friendly reception, gestures such as offering water, good-quality coffee or little snacks make visitors feel welcome and valued. Here the same rules apply as in the hotel industry: the more services you offer, the more your visitors feel like guests.

5. ... and leave as an ambassador

The same should apply to their departure. If having a taxi waiting or giving the visitor a cereal bar or a bottle of water as travel sustenance makes their return journey more comfortable, then maybe they'll look forward to coming back again.



Example of the PURE style collection

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