

LODGING

Don't Be Left in the Dark

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If the grandiose allure of hotel lobbies and generous amenities are any indication, it is clear that “there’s no second chance to make a first impression” in the hospitality industry. Yet, hospitality settings are at risk for being left in the dark without the right lighting, as this single element can be used to capture guests’ attention, convey the hotel’s brand identity, and create a distinct end-user experience to ultimately encourage repeat visits.

Specifying the Light “Characters”

To make any story come to life, it is essential to have a colorful cast of characters. Similarly in lighting design, illuminating a space requires careful selection of the right sources to achieve a five-star shine that not only helps tell the hotel’s story, but also meets the property’s design and energy goals.

Because one size does not always fit all, the following solutions should be considered to create a mixed-source lighting design that best serves each space’s unique objectives:

Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs): With standard 80+ Color Rendering Index (CRI) options available in the smallest possible packages, this highly efficient, versatile light source can deliver the same fixture-to-fixture color consistency previously only found in incandescent and tungsten-halogen sources, all while affording more than 50 percent in energy savings. When aligned with a compatible dimmer, some LED solutions also offer dimming options down to the one-percent range.

Ceramic Metal Halides: With a standard CRI of 80+, this high-efficacy source, which can be utilized within high-ceiling, general, and accent applications to accentuate a hotel’s architectural features, is suitable where occupancy control and dimming are not required.

Compact Fluorescents: Featuring a good CRI of 80+, this efficient source is designed for general, task, and wall wash applications, ensuring brightly lit spaces within applications such as business centers and conference rooms.

Low-Voltage Halogens: Having the highest CRI of 100, this source's faceted reflectors enhance perceived brightness within a space and can provide numerous lighting possibilities when paired with an architectural dimming system.

There is also an energy-efficient, sustainable lighting solution often overlooked—daylight. Proper use of this could save hotel managers between 15 to 75 percent in energy savings depending on occupancy patterns, control strategy, and the amount of daylight available.

Layering Your Lighting Story

In the competitive hospitality landscape, it is becoming increasingly important to create a “wow factor.” While designers often heavily depend on decorative lighting such as sconces and chandeliers to help achieve this, the accurate layering of ambient, task, and accent lighting play an integral part in achieving that powerful first statement.

Ambient Lighting: Ambient or general lighting is the main illumination type within a hotel space – and the primary focus of energy reduction efforts. For designers, this can also be one of the most challenging, as they must carefully plan how much ambient light must be added to seamlessly balance with decorative lighting such as chandeliers and pendants.

To effectively blend decorative and ambient light without losing sight of the hotel's story, cove lighting is a good option. This type of lighting can be dimmed or switched. An effective uplighting system is another way to discreetly and elegantly illuminate a space. Alternatively, downlights can target areas in need of focus to create visual interest and highlight unique architectural features.

Task lighting: Task lighting is the functional level of lighting used to accommodate fine visual tasks that require higher levels of visibility. In the hospitality arena, it is often challenging to incorporate this lighting while still maintaining the same level of drama and style – especially in demanding spaces such as casinos, where reduced glare and high clarity is critical. In such instances, merging ambient lighting with more concealed, linear solutions to ensure adequate task illumination is a necessity.

In other hospitality applications, such as a fine dining restaurant in a hotel, downlights are effective in delivering task lighting without subtracting from the space's aesthetics. For a touch of home, simple tabletop lamps, as often found within the guestroom or lobby waiting area, also further promote a welcoming feel. This type of lighting is also considered portable (i.e., utilizes a cord and plug) and therefore does not count in energy code calculations.

Accent lighting: Accent lighting is often considered the “emotional layer” of lighting and as a general rule, should be a minimum of four to five times the general lighting level to provide the appropriate contrast. In hospitality environments, this layer can spotlight architectural details and logos through uplighting, key lighting, or backlighting to add pizzazz and further reinforce the hotel’s branding.

Recessed lighting fixtures are effective and popular accent lighting solutions, as they deliver a narrow-beam of light to “punch up” select areas while offering optimal versatility to meet the needs and tone of multipurpose hospitality spaces such as hotel ballrooms.

Light Narration

If light sources are the characters of a lighting design story, control solutions are the narrators.

In a hospitality setting, pairing lighting fixtures with one of the following control solutions not only affords hotels up to 75 to 80 percent average savings during peak power usage, but the flexibility to support a range of functions:

Daylight Harvesting Systems: These systems are tuned to control electric lights by minimizing power consumption when daylight integration is maximized.

Networked Lighting: This is a programmable system that can integrate and master control of the hospitality environment, including lighting, motorized window treatments, thermal and mechanical requirements, as well as security and audio-visual interfacing.

Wireless Control Systems: This type of system is easier to install due to a lesser need to run wiring from lighting control stations to desired fixtures. It also allows end-users to address individual or grouped fixtures from a wireless hand-held control station.

The Final Chapter

As today’s lighting industry evolves, it is essential to understand the lighting options available, their capabilities, and how they will impact the surrounding environment. This knowledge, in combination with the proper layering of light and strategic design, will not only allow hotel managers to reach their goals but also to create an experience that encourages guests to revisit, refer, and remember their space.

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