

Keys to a successful hotel lobby redesign

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Story Highlights

Lobby redesigns not only create a more welcoming first impression; they improve hotel functionality and generate more revenue.

It's important before you begin any lobby renovation to prioritize planning and strategy.

Lobby redesigns should be done in phases to avoid a shock to existing operations.



Editor's note: This is the third in a three-party series on hotel trends. Read part 1, "[Hotel trends: How to stay ahead of the curve](#)," and part 2, "[Experiential travelers crave authenticity](#)."

You only get one chance to make a first impression. And the hotel lobby has always been the guest's first impression upon entering the hotel. As hotel design has evolved, the idea of the lobby solely being a place for guests to check in has changed dramatically—and for the better. Current hotel design trends are expanding the lobby to change the traditional adjacencies and relationships between public areas of the hotel.

Functionally, a lobby serves as the main circulation space and hub of the hotel. But today's lobby is taking on a multifunctional approach to engage the guest in a social setting. Areas that used to be considered totally separate rooms—such as the business center, game room, meeting areas, bar, lounge and restaurant—are being combined into a larger social area to provide a common place for guests to relax, organize, meet, greet, eat or do work-related tasks.

Why make the change?

While many brands are requiring existing hotels to renovate their lobbies to incorporate this new way of envisioning lobbies, developers and operators also can consider the benefit to their bottom line. Attracting guests to spend more time in the lobby also can lead to increased food-and-beverage sales, especially as more offerings are provided to the guests while they work, entertain or relax. In addition, the lobby is a business-friendly hub during week and family-friendly over the weekend.



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The new lobby reinforces the basic premise that the hospitality industry is about service and personal attention for the guests. From that first impression when a guest walks in the door, the new lobby makes them feel welcome and that translates into repeat business.

Many times in a lobby renovation, there are opportunities for additional return on investment. This is a chance to reevaluate the use of all of the public areas of the hotel.

- Do you have a meeting room that is underutilized? Perhaps it makes sense to incorporate that space into the lobby and increase the flexibility of the space.
- Is there a restaurant with too many seats for the market demand? It

- might make sense to break part or all of it a part of the new lobby area.
- Is the business center not being used because it hidden away?
- What are your real needs for a lounge or bar area? Perhaps, it needs to be closer to the activities of the lobby and incorporated into the overall space.

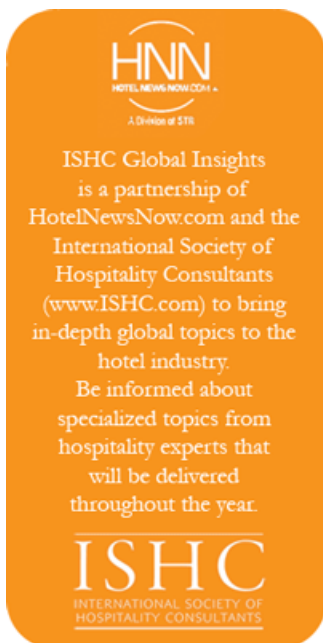
In addition to better locations and uses, you also might be able to combine activities to lower labor or operating expenses. All of these return-on-investment opportunities can be beneficial to the hotel and can be completed in a cost-effective manner with minimal disruption if carefully planned.

Getting started

Before you begin any lobby renovation, prioritize planning and strategy. The entire project team—owner, operations staff, brand and design team—need to examine and outline their priorities to get on the same page before any work is started:

- Identify any functions required in the new lobby design that might be provided in some other location at the property. (e.g. There is a separate remote business center, but the new requirements call for computers in the lobby.)
- Look for areas that aren't working in the hotel or are underutilized from an operations standpoint, as this is the time to rectify issues.
- Develop a program of spaces, sizes and functional relationships in conjunction with the design team.
- Project management is essential to bring all the "moving parts" together. Retain a qualified project manager to establish a realistic project budget, schedule and phasing plan.
- Identify the timeframe when it is best to have the lobby under construction and when it will be the least disruptive to guests.
- Develop a conceptual design for the team to review and discuss to ensure the objectives are being met by all.

Remember, it's not about increasing square footage as much as reallocating space and reconfiguring adjacencies. Continued input from all key personnel will lead to a successful implementation of the new lobby and prevent "scope creep."



Strategies for success

At first, owners might be concerned about renovating their hotel to include a new lobby design due to the costs associated with it. There are cost-effective measures that can be taken to maximize the dollars and minimize the disruption so that an owner will be more likely to implement the lobby.

- Minimize relocation of services. Most new lobbies require more power and data connectivity as well as different F&B options. Utilizing existing plumbing and electricity (without having to tear down walls or dig up floors) will reduce money and time. However, sometimes it might make sense to relocate the bar due to visibility and operating issues. Increased ROI might make a more disruptive renovation worth the additional investment.
- Don't get hung up on "prototype" fixtures and designs. Lobbies come in all shapes and sizes and one size does not always fit all. If it is difficult to reconfigure your

current lobby to fit the new prototype design, don't hesitate to look at readily available furniture, fixtures and equipment, where possible, to mitigate the cost of customizing a prototype.

- Phase the renovation. As the main thoroughfare for the hotel, it might not always be possible to shut down the entire lobby while the hotel is open to renovate. By renovating in phases, you can create temporary stations for the front desk, F&B, breakfast area, etc. while completing the work. This will enable you to still collect revenue and serve your guests with minimal disruption to your guests. A logical phasing plan is essential and should be developed so the renovation progresses smoothly.

By spending money in the lobby, owners can enhance every guest's experience. The bigger "bang for the buck" is influencing the guest's first impression. Creating a more functional, more vibrant and more interesting lobby can make a positive difference in guest perception and comfort of the hotel. The new synergies created from these interrelated spaces and

functions can produce increased revenue ultimately leading to guest loyalty.

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