

# First word: Don't overlook lighting

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By [Paul J. Heney](#)

[Hotel Design](#)

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When was the last time you thought about lighting? If you're like most, it was probably when you noticed a bad example of it—a guestroom with dim fixtures or a lobby with spotlights overpowering an otherwise elegant piece of artwork. But done correctly, lighting will accentuate your designs, not call attention to itself.

"Not only are spaces that are over-lit distracting and uncomfortable, but they also drain a ton of unnecessary energy," says Al Near, SVP of sales and marketing for USAL. "Conversely, if energy savings is too much a focal point, then space can tend to be under-lit ... then attempts to create lighting effects or drama may fall flat."

According to Near, a good way to avoid these pitfalls and achieve different lighting effects at different times is to incorporate a lighting controls system with multiple, preset lighting levels for all public spaces.

"The success of any hotel depends upon attention to detail, and first impressions are critical," says Paula Ziegenbein, application marketing manager for Osram Sylvania. "The lobby and reception area should invite people in and make them feel welcome. Adequate light levels and well-placed lighting fixtures help orient guests and enhance their comfort levels. Drawing attention to selected architectural details, artwork and furnishings will increase property appeal."

Ziegenbein says proper lighting in public spaces and pre-function areas involves a layered approach to the design.

"Ambient or general lighting is the foundation, or base layer, and luminaries selected for this function are typically spaced to provide uniform light over a wide area. Accent lighting is 'directional' light aimed at an object or focal point of a room and is generally used to highlight and draw attention, to make something prominent, or to create visual separation," she says.

Accent lighting works best when a contrast is created through the use of directional light sources and luminaries, varying the intensity or amount of light in a particular space. Or through the use of color.

Near says several factors come into play when evaluating proper lighting for public spaces and pre-function areas, including:

— How high is the ceiling? If the ceiling is high, then higher wattage lighting fixtures will be required, along with the use of select lamp sources that have a sufficient amount of punch—such as ceramic metal halide or higher wattage compact fluorescent—to allow light to travel to the floor or task areas.

— Is there heavy use of decorative ceiling and wall luminaries? How much ambient daylight is present? Incorporating too many recessed lighting fixtures with decorative fixtures and/or ambient light can often cause a space to appear over lit or make the ceiling appear to be cluttered.

— What colors are present? A variety of lamp color temperatures can be mixed within a public space to draw out certain colors or create dramatic effects.

Don't overlook maintenance issues with lighting. Exceptional lighting design will quickly go from amazing to terrible when the inevitable task of fixture maintenance is overlooked, too difficult or too costly. Remind your clients that the material cost of a lighting system is small when compared to the cost of the energy needed to operate it and the labor to keep it operational.