

Design Imperatives

Jimmy Mistry

Designing commercial spaces is a process largely dictated by the nature of usage and industry specifications. Each sector has its own set of requirements and they vary drastically. The principles followed while planning a 2,000 sq. ft. corporate office cannot be applied to the layout of a 25,000 sq. ft. call center operation, a luxury hotel or a showroom, simply because their priorities differ.

If you are designing a



24x7 call center the priority definitely goes towards services where the downtime is zero. Critical areas are Power Supply backups, UPS with a hot standby, DGs for alternate power, structured cabling with 100% redundancy, and the acoustics. Last but not least are the aesthetics including recreational areas for unwinding.

Similarly, if you are planning the interiors for a studio, the power and acoustics matter the most. The approach to air-conditioning is also different. You can start designing the structure only once the services have been taken care of; again the downtimes have to be zero.

On the other hand, aesthetics is the most important factor when you are planning the interiors for a luxury hotel, followed by human safety standards and facilities.

Designing for corporates is a totally different ball game. You need to get involved in their philosophy, understand what they want to convey and then design as per those parameters.

Companies are more cost-conscious and practical in their approach these days.

At the same time, there is also a greater emphasis on aesthetics in the work areas. Previously, companies used to spend on front-end spaces to impress clients and visitors, but now they are also doing up back-end

offices to provide a better work environment.

Often human resource professionals get involved in this aspect, because creating a comfortable and pleasing work environment is a key factor in employee retention these days, especially for companies in the IT and ITES sectors. There have even been cases of people opting for lower-paying jobs in another company if there is a better ambience and working environment.

While designing, one

has to be very particular about the air-conditioning and indoor air quality, otherwise you get what is known as 'office sickness', where employees end up yawning away after working for just a few hours. Many companies also conduct indoor air audits and ensure that the system is designed in a way that there is at least one air change every hour.

Security is also a priority while designing corporate interiors. Nowadays biometrics has replaced smart cards and proximity readers, analog fire panels are replaced by Digital addressable type with Pro-

- Commercial design principles depend on the usage and industry specifications
- While aesthetics are important for a hotel, critical services count in a call centre
- Companies are spending more on better work environments today

grammed Smoke Detectors.

The impact made by commercial spaces on end users and visitors also depends a great deal on how you illuminate the space and make provision for changing light scenarios. With the use of mood lighting you can even make a factory look like a discotheque - as long as you light it up properly.

*Jimmy Mistry is
Managing Director,
Della Technica*