

Brightening the Corporate Image

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Any discussion of good lighting techniques can become quite involved, but we can begin to get an understanding of the effects of lighting in creating a pleasing and well-functioning space by examining the four following examples. What makes one example sparkle and another seen dull and flat? We'll tell you what we think, but in the end, you be the judge.

Let's say you've carefully followed directions to a specific business address downtown, and now you find yourself in an unfamiliar office building. You ride the elevator up to a floor that, at first sight, resembles a gargantuan maze. The corridor before you takes right-angle turns in both directions; there are intimidating rows of closed doors stretching as far as your eyes can see. You have no clear idea of where you should go or who to ask. Should you interrupt that secretary busy at her work in the first cubicle you come to? Or should you approach the person behind that high counter over there?

As a first time visitor, you are confused and ill at ease. Your initial impression of this particular business organization is – to put it kindly – not a favorable one.

In reality this sort of corporate blunder in imagery building could have been avoided quite easily if our hypothetical company here had only given some forethought to the all-important issue of first impressions.

How can we make the entrance to a corporate headquarters (or to the foyer of your home, for that matter) an inviting, confidence-building place for the visiting public? We might begin by choosing and using appropriate colors. Or perhaps we could add some interesting attractive design touches.

The figures on the next page show a completely open setting, no surprises. Still

there is confusion because a visitor gets no direction through light, layout or signage. And there is no contrast because the light is all too bright.

Nothing will work very well without good lighting. The underlying principle in this case is that people, like moths, are drawn instinctively toward light. Good lighting does not mean an overpowering amount of light, such as that found in a blazing desert under the noontime sun. For human beings also like contrasts, particularly so in lighting. We should try to emulate a sunlit garden, with light and shade, accents and background. By creating lighting that is both comfortable and interesting, we capture the attention of visitors/guests and guide them almost subconsciously to their intended destinations. ■

About the Author

Bill Joel received his B.A. from Brown University with creative design courses at the Rhode Island School of Design. He did further studies in interior and lighting design at the New York School of Design and Pratt Institute.

A professional member of AID-ASID from 1963 to 1993, Bill received a Fellowship from ASID in 1978. In 1992, he became one of the first Certified Interior Designers of the Commonwealth of Virginia. His work experience includes residential, commercial and institutional remodeling and new structures, as well as a number of feasibility studies, all with an emphasis on effective, energy-conscious, quality-lit environments. For more details, consult *Marquis Who's Who in America*. Bill has also served as a member of the FIDER Board of Visitors and Accreditation Committee, Foundation for Interior Design Education and Research; set and lighting designer for the Richmond Forum and



With its marbled-wall, this corridor would seem opulent enough. Yet the only entrance visible is the windowed door under the exit sign. Is this what is called a corridor to nowhere?



The strong horizontal of the door design is a visual block which says, "Don't enter," creating a subconscious sense of confusion. Worse, the brightest area leads not to the direction that visitors are headed but to an interior corridor, adding to the confusion.

Barksdale Theatre; and guest speaker on various radio and TV spots. Bill may be reached at Rich@RichArtCo.com.



Here's a completely open setting, no surprises. Still there is confusion because a visitor gets no direction through light, layout or signage. And there is no contrast because the light is all too light.



Comfortably directed, with the visual direction clear and non-threatening, visitors enter with confidence