



The right hue for you

BAD LIGHTING IS THE BIGGEST CULPRIT WHEN IT COMES TO A ROOM FEELING UNWELCOMING AND DATED. **KAREN WALLACE** LOOKS AT HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST LIGHTING FOR YOUR PROJECT.

When it comes to lighting design there is no denying that there is a lot to think about. What sort of lighting is needed? How much light is required? Where do the lights need to be positioned?

Well, before you can answer any of these questions, you need to consider the space that you're working with.

All rooms need a variety of lighting such as ambient or background lighting, task lighting for close-up work or accent lighting to draw attention to special features. It is so simple to update and improve the atmosphere of a room with good, sufficient lighting.

Lighting is a significant consumer of energy in commercial buildings. When looking at how much energy is consumed by lighting in commercial spaces such as a restaurant, a fifth of the total site energy that is used is not from refrigeration, cooling or water heating, but from lighting. This is why it is so important to choose the right type of lighting and to not go overboard.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD LIGHTING

The majority of people seem to underestimate just how important and crucial it is to have good lighting and is often considered last, when in actual fact it should be one of the first things to think about. It is also extremely important to find the right balance of light and how much is needed in the space.

Excessive lighting in a room can be quite harsh on the eye and exhausting, resulting in the space feeling unwelcoming. A good solution to this scenario would be ambient lighting, as it is much softer and less intruding.



In a retail environment, the type of lighting and fittings used within the space needs to suit the nature of the store and the products being sold.

The darker the room is the more intimate it becomes as you'll find that the darkness forces people to draw closer to each other so they can see the other person. A dim light encourages clustering, which could be perfect for a bar but not so good for an office space where good quality task lighting would be more appreciated.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF LIGHTS

The different types of lights that are available are tubular fluorescent, compact fluorescent, LEDs, metal halide and halogen.

These five types of lights have different lighting characteristics. The fluorescent, LED and metal halide lamps are more energy efficient and last longer than a halogen. Commonly used in commercial spaces, metal halide lights are great for illuminating large areas due to their energy efficiency.

LEDs have now superseded incandescent lights and will also eventually supersede halogens and metal halide. LED technology continues

to improve, while the cost continues to decrease.

DIFFERENT SPACES REQUIRE DIFFERENT LIGHTING

As noted earlier, it is important to assess the space you are working with, consider its purpose and understand what types and how much lighting is needed as this will vary depending on the setting.

Restaurants and bars: These are hugely varied areas and require a large variety of light sources to make it work successfully. Restaurant and bar lighting needs to be sophisticated yet subtle. Consideration needs to be given not just to make the premises stand out and catch the eye of potential customers, but also to the customers' needs. For example, low ambient lighting over a table for two will create an intimate mood, however there needs to be enough light so they can see what is on their plate. LED lighting around the bar can create impact and interest.

Retail and display lighting: There is a lot to contemplate when it comes to retail and display lighting. There is the general illumination of the space, focus lighting to break through the ambient lighting, directional lighting for window displays and point of promotion, lighting over counters, as well as signage and feature lighting! The type of lighting and fittings used within the space needs to suit the nature of the store and the products being sold.

Office lighting: There is wide of range of lighting that is suitable for office spaces, it's just about finding the right balance. There are direct or indirect modular systems, linear systems, floor lamps, table lamps and reception lighting. In a reception space for example, you want good task lighting as the receptionists need sufficient light to work with. It is also important for office lighting to not be too stark, bright and cool, as it can start to look and feel quite clinical and unwelcoming.

SELECTING THE RIGHT FITTING

When it comes to selecting the right fitting, it does get a bit overwhelming as there are numerous types to choose from. Establishment needs to be made as to what the purpose of the lights will be, for example task, ambient or feature lighting?

LEDs can be used anywhere where a halogen or fluorescent down light would be used. LEDs are an extremely popular choice with designer's to highlight interesting architectural aspects or to recess into joinery.

Fluorescents are most likely used for channel lighting, task lighting, office lighting and in large warehouses. They are a great option if the purpose is to flood a large space with bright light. Fluorescents are a great lighting option as they use less energy than other types of fittings.

CONSIDER THE ASPECT OF THE ROOMS

A factor that is often overlooked is how the location of a room can determine how much light is needed. North facing rooms allow for a high

level of natural light to flood through, resulting in less artificial light being required. On the other hand, south facing rooms have no direct sun, giving the benefit of a softly lit space. However, artificial lighting must be considered for specific task lighting and to compensate for the lack of natural light.

WHAT MATERIALS ARE BEING USED IN THE SPACE?

Deliberation needs to be taken as to what materials are being used in the space and their level of reflectivity. Materials with a high reflectivity glossy tiles or a polished stone surface will illuminate the space greater than that of a flat or matte surface, which absorbs a great deal of light. The same goes with dark and light surfaces. The lighter the tonal level of the material, the higher its reflective properties are. Darker materials absorb more light than they emit. For example, dark painted walls will absorb a lot of light which could be great if the aim is to create an intimate feel, while the light will bounce back off lightly painted surfaces.

EXTERIOR LIGHTING

When choosing fittings to be used externally, the technical elements and the deterioration of the product needs to be analysed. Ingress Protection (IP) is a standard rating that determines how waterproof and dust/solid object proof a light fitting is. The first digit in an IP rating refers to how dust proof a fitting is and the second digit refers to how waterproof a fitting is.

The right amount and execution of exterior lighting is important as the exterior is the first thing anyone sees upon entering a space. Insufficient exterior lighting could determine whether or not people feel welcome to enter the space. Exterior signage lighting for a restaurant is vital for logical reasons such as patrons being able to see the name of the restaurant and any other necessary information, as well as aesthetic reasons. If done correctly the external lighting can inform patrons of the atmosphere and feel of the space internally and can lure them in.

LIGHTING TRENDS

Like fashion, trends will eventually re-surface. It seems that feature lighting trends have done a complete 360. Large, opulent chandeliers that were used over 100 years ago are extremely popular nowadays whether it's in a residential home, restaurant or retail fit out. Lighting designers have taken the classic chandelier and modernised it to make them versatile within different interiors.

The current trend of simple hanging light bulbs shows how we've shifted back to basics. Simple and sleek light fittings are the leading choice as they tie in perfectly with current interior design trends.

Even though feature lighting remains very important, it is slowly becoming less of a priority as peoples' concerns are shifting from the aesthetic qualities to the energy usage. We all know how it feels to receive a costly electricity bill every quarter, and now people want to do something about it. People are becoming more and more educated and are now exploring ways that they can light a space effectively without using so much energy. Energy efficient lighting is an evolving trend that won't be disappearing anytime soon.

LEDs are the way of the future and they are becoming more linear, compact and streamline which corresponds perfectly with modern interior design. They are ideal for installing in joinery units, to wash down a niche in a wall or to shine down off shelving. They are becoming more versatile and will continue to keep evolving.

It is vital to take the time to assess the area you are working with before leaping into imperative decisions about what lighting needs to be used. If the initial evaluation is done correctly, you will find that the lighting design completes a space and is an essential aspect when it comes to the workability of the space. When done successfully, it will create a huge impact on the user and establish the perfect atmosphere. **CH**

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