

20 TIPS ON PRESENTING CORPORATE & OFFICE AREAS

1. If you operate an office that receives visiting clients you probably have a reception area. Such an area can be used to great advantage. While your client is waiting to see you why not give them the opportunity to learn about you and the company? Large photographs of the factory or the products / services you provide help to make it clear what your company does or stands for. It also gives an insight into areas your visitor may not be able to access under normal circumstances. You may be surprised at how interested people are in you and what you do behind the scenes.
2. Alternatively you could take the opportunity to feature pictures of the key workers in your team. A head and shoulders photo and a name plate will enable first time visitors to recognise the person they are to meet and to determine their position within the management team. This is considerably comforting when you are about to meet someone for the first time. It also helps to make the staff feel valued and a real part of the organisation.
3. If you think that you need to be a little more creative why not feature your staff in poses that display their favourite pastime. If the M.D. is a keen angler, or the Sales Manager takes part in amateur dramatics, feature them in suitable attire. This makes the person appear "human" and not an office automaton thus making them easier to relate to.
4. If customers are to be required to wait a while, or even if waiting to make a complaint, consider carefully how you can entertain them while they are waiting. You need the area to be calming and friendly so avoid aggressive colours such as bright reds or solid blacks and consider featuring pastel colours in abstract designs of a gentle nature. You may even consider some humorous cartoons or caricatures of the senior management as a way to present yourselves as people of a good humour and friendly nature. Try to be general in subject so as to appeal to everyone. For example, avoid pictures of football clubs etc even if the M.D. is a big fan. If customers are entertained and relaxed by your choice of images and you come out to meet them with a big helpful smile on your face, they will find it harder to be angry with you when you first meet.
5. Similar rules apply when decorating the general admin areas of the office. It is likely that the work is constant and repetitive so make the staff comfortable by displaying bright and positive images they can enjoy. But avoid scenes of Far Eastern Beaches and Palm Trees, you might just find them drifting off on a mental holiday.
6. In your Marketing or Sales Area try and avoid the cliché pictures of Lions stating "The Customer is King" etc. While true, such messages are tired and lack impact these days. Instead, why not feature nicely framed letters from happy customers, certificates of achievement, employee of the month awards, pictures of staff outings that were earned as rewards against results. These will make it quite clear why everyone is there and reminders of the rewards they get for effort will spur them on to win future acknowledgements.
7. Make sure your art is modern, popular and right up to date. Framed calendar prints of Monet's Water Lillie's in tired frames against decrepit wall paper or wood wall panelling just will not do. They give out signals of being slow, old fashioned and behind the times. If you happen to like the classics it okay to hang them, just make sure you do so in a celebratory way. Big positive prints and good frames will make much more of a statement than something old and tired.
8. As with flowers and fish tanks it may be possible to hire art for your workplace. This has the advantage of regular refreshment as the supplier visits at allocated times to change the displays. It may also just give you the chance to see what you want to keep on a more permanent basis once you have had a chance to live with them for a while.
9. If you would rather put your money to a good cause why not sponsor a local School or Hospital to provide paintings by pupils or patients. These are fun and different and show a caring side to your business. Framed well, even the poorest of efforts can look very interesting considering the source.
10. Whatever you choose, make an effort to frame it well. Cheap tatty frames do nothing for your image or your perceived attitude to quality. A tatty attitude to your décor could suggest to a client that you have a sloppy attitude to your business or the service you will give them. The presentation you make in your place of work says a great deal about you and what you stand for.
11. Try to discourage staff from littering the walls of their work area with personal effects such as pictures of Pop Stars, bawdy calendars, humorous verses about working here being made easier by being crazy etc. If these areas are encountered by your clients they will give the impression of a loosely run ship. By all means allow staff to personalise their area to an extent, pictures of the family can remind clients that after 5pm this person returns to being human again. If possible, keep the other trends exclusively for the staff room.
12. Try not to make the work environment too sterile. Make good use of plants, preferably synthetic as these do not take the oxygen out of the air, maybe a fish tank, these done well can look very impressive and encourage tranquillity. Good use of lighting can make an enormous difference to the atmosphere of the place as can a TV screen permanently tuned to a news channel. Again, announcing to all who visit that you are in touch with the World beyond your own doors.
13. Strongly discourage staff from holding personal conversations within earshot of waiting clients. Not only is this immensely embarrassing for the person waiting, it suggests lack of discipline and attention to the job at hand. What Molly did with her boyfriend last night should remain the exclusive interest of – Molly and her boyfriend.
14. Make sure reception staff speak well and convey elegance. Make sure they know your clients name and use it each time they address them to offer coffee or update on your availability. Only select individuals with a good spoken voice to greet clients in person or by phone or make announcements on the P.A. system. This is very important when aiming to establish the quality of your company to clients and staff alike.
15. The smart appearance of staff is essential to maintain standards. Clean shaven, well tied ties, smart haircut etc go a long way to making a great impression. In these days of increased casual attitudes it is not difficult to stand above the competition. You don't have to go over the top but rolled up shirt sleeves still look much better than a Tee Shirt.
16. Washrooms for use by you and your clients are often over looked when it comes to setting standards. Simple things like making sure soap, tissue, toilet seats (believe it or not) are all there, along with a working extractor fan, hot water and hand dryers are the simple things that can be allowed to let slip. Cleanliness is paramount too of course. Why not go and check your facilities right now and see how much you can improve them.
17. If welcoming foreign visitors make the effort to ensure you are familiar with their customs when greeting. For example if greeting a guest from Malaysia it is customary not to shake hands (although they will as they are also aware of your culture) but to greet them by placing the palm of your right hand against your own left shoulder as you make a subtle bow towards them. It is also good manners for the majority of far eastern countries to intently study their business card for a few seconds when it is offered to you and to avoid pointing with your finger, instead gesturing direction with a gentle upturned hand.
18. When clients are leaving you after a meeting, make the effort to at least see them to the door of your building or, if appropriate, walk them to their vehicle. So many times I have been given excellent treatment by my host only to feel hurriedly ejected at the end of the meeting. Though this was never intentional, it is often the last few minutes of your meeting that you remember after leaving.
19. Go the extra mile to impress. Always send a short note or Email to thank your guest for coming and to suggest the next steps of your trading relationship. Any deal you are after is not in the bag until the contracts are concluded.
20. Constantly appraise your working environment and create a check list of points to maintain at all times. It's easy to forget these important details but they can make all the difference to your image both within and outside the office walls.