Bright Ideas

Project the image you want, and boost your bottom line by giving your spa’s lighting the consideration it deserves.

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ny number of spa owners and managers are affected by rising energy costs. The search for relief often starts with lighting because it’s such an obvious form of energy use. Examining your electric illumination is a smart thing to do, but focusing primarily on energy consumption is nothing short of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. Chances are you’re not spending more than a few thousand dollars (if that) each year on the energy consumed by lighting. What lighting is doing for your spa, however, could have a value that is 10, 20, or more times the cost of energy. Of course, no one wants to waste energy, but the real question is: Are you getting all you should from your lighting?

It shouldn’t be difficult for you to answer that question on your own by examining how you use and are using lighting. Consider the general ambiance of your spa and the environment you want to create. Is lighting helping you establish the image you want? Is it bringing out the color and texture of furniture and wall and floor coverings? Are you highlighting framed certificates and diplomas, paintings, and prints? Are distinct areas illuminated differently, not only to make each appear separate, but to create visual variances that counteract any tendency toward institutional sameness?

Next, consider the work that’s performed in various areas and the degree to which lighting is used to help ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Keep in mind that every task has a visual component, and the quality of lighting determines how effectively people see. In areas used for cutting hair, the importance of lighting requires no elaboration. But what about color? What a color appears to be is determined largely by the light in which it’s seen. While few spa owners will be willing to invest in two or three types of lighting for a given area, you would be well served by installing dimmers that control the lighting above each station. This allows clients to see how the color of their hair changes depending on the lighting.

Color is also an issue where manicures and pedicures are performed and makeup is applied. Since more detail work is involved, the nature of these tasks typically requires additional lighting. In massage rooms, dimming can achieve the soothing low levels of light needed to establish a relaxing atmosphere. Brighter lighting is necessary for cleanup.

In administrative areas used for bookkeeping, making appointments, and so on, lighting should be designed to support the tasks performed. As more spas come to rely on computer-based management aids, the right lighting will be essential to avoid the screen glare that can obscure a display. Lighting can also be used to stimulate sales. It can call attention to retail products and other materials on display, such as framed notices advising clients that gift certificates make great presents or that a spa visit can be a wonderful reward for employees.

And what about outdoor lighting? Because lighting at night defines a scene, you can use it to create the picture you want people to see. Does your outdoor lighting turn your facility into an image-enhancing advertisement for itself at night, without being garish or putting light where it’s not needed or wanted, such as onto your neighbors’ property or into the eyes of drivers? When outdoor lighting works well, it can help convert passersby into future clients. The lighting you use to create a distinct appearance for your spa can also make the area around your spa safer. Better lighting in parking areas can help prevent accidents and create a safer environment. Whenever you install better outdoor illumination, you help reduce the risk of incidents and may also lower your insurance liability premiums.

If you’re not getting all you could from your lighting, your spa could be a candidate for what the National Lighting Bureau calls High-Benefit Lighting—efficient lighting designed to maximize the return on your lighting investment. For more information, visit the National Lighting Bureau website at www.nlb.org.—Bud Drago

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