



Screens, triggers and more influence hotel design

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The No. 1 goal of an interior designer is to leave a lasting impression, a feat that is growing more difficult, given today's design-savvy travelers. Designers are considering new ways to catch the attention of guests, looking at advances in technology for inspiration and finding it in digital screens and motion triggers. But true digital design means considering many elements along the way, according to designer Nick Albert, director at Illuminate Lighting Design, a lighting design consultancy.

From Albert's perspective, any hotel can rig up a set of video screens on a wall somewhere, but that doesn't mean a designer is thinking digitally. Instead, Albert said the future of interior design

lies in technology's ability to make a space change in response to the guests that enter it.

"When designing in the past, we have had to make hard decisions that we don't necessarily have to make anymore," Albert said. "We've had to settle on one wall finish that will forever define a hotel lobby. Now designers make that wall into a media space which, through lighting and digital effects, can say any number of things any number of times."

Unfortunately, Albert said this technology is still in its infancy due to it being very expensive to implement and hotels unwilling to take risks. The biggest change Albert expects to see in the near future is the use of three-dimensional projectors on hotel facades. Using these, the shape of a hotel facade can be mapped out and an image tuned to match the shape, removing imperfections caused from broadcasting a flat image onto a textured surface.

Darrell Long, design director for hospitality design firm Hirsch Bedner Associates, said the industry drivers for design are boutique hotels, which have high ambitions and are the first to ask to be shown something they've never seen before.

Long said the majority of large hotels that can afford this expensive technology are in destinations like Las Vegas. "As new technology becomes easier to work with, it will be more prolific, and right now Las Vegas is doing it like everything is done in Las Vegas—crass," Long said. "Architecture comes first, and technology must compliment the architecture."