



BEVERLY LANDAIS, CEO, DEVEREUX CHAMBERS

First impressions

A client's first experience of your business is often formed as soon as they step into your building. The ambience, the service and the reception they receive are hugely influential in creating that great first impression.

Physical work space also influences internal morale as well as external client perceptions of your business. Shabby uncared for premises send strong subliminal messages about the true values of an organisation: the way in which the business operates as well as the attitude of the people who work there. It can affect productivity and reduce commitment, which in turn translates into lower quality client experience. Ultimately, it can adversely influence the values held as well as shape which behaviours are deemed acceptable.

This is not the client experience you want to convey nor does such an atmosphere energise your people and encourage engagement.

After constant use over many years, our client reception area, conference rooms and common spaces at our main building Devereux Court and at Queen Elizabeth Building in Temple, London, showed distinct signs of wear and tear. There was a need for the space to be redesigned to meet the growing needs of clients by creating additional conference rooms and seminar facilities, as well as by smartening up our common areas.

We grasped the nettle at the end of 2009 when our members decided to invest in refurbishing our premises as part of an ongoing process to refresh our brand and modernise the business.

The refurbishment which we undertook earlier this year had two key objectives: to enhance the client experience and to deliver the organisational priorities of creating a better physical working environment for members and staff. The Devereux Court building has a rich sense of history and

Chambers has 60 years of heritage. It was important to respect this. Equally, the refurbishment needed to be appropriate to our client centric work: not overly opulent or self indulgent.

The result is a calm, professional yet friendly and unstuffy working environment. Clients visiting our Chambers always comment on how valued they feel and the warm welcome they receive. They also enjoy the comfortable surroundings and modern conferencing facilities.

You never get a second chance at a first impression. What kind of first impression do people have when they walk into your building? Are they made to feel comfortable and welcome? Does the working environment of the surroundings contribute to the feeling that they are valued clients?

Test this yourself – walk into your own building with fresh eyes. First impressions count: what are yours? ^{mp}

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