

ARCHITECTURE

Convey the Power of Place to Customers

Think for a moment about your favorite destination. Whether it's a beach house on the Cape, the spa at a resort hotel or a window table at a romantic restaurant, there's something unique about that place that stirs your soul. It offers you an experience, communicates a message and makes you look forward to a return visit.

Architects are in the business of creating that emotive reaction to the places they design. Their thrill comes from aligning the experience and message perceived by the customer with the business goals of the client. It's the perfect marriage of the poetic and the practical.

Good design brings bottom-line value to business. Customers – diners, shoppers, theater goers, health club members, college students, hotel guests and such – are much more aware of the customer experience when translated through design.

A retail store that welcomes buyers inside is a good example. By letting customers see on the outside what awaits them on the inside, shops send a clear message inviting browsers to experience the store. Successful retailers tell their stories with large, well-lit store windows and colorful signage that send a message from the moment the customer's eyes hit their storefronts.

Everything Communicates.

Architecture and interiors communicate on many levels. When successful, the process delivers a pow-



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erful message. Design can influence buyer behavior far more than a print or broadcast ad. Buildings and interior spaces have become the brand experience. Here are a few examples.

- Health clubs can be seen as places to nurture the body and the mind. Their message, reflected through design, should be to create a place of total wellness and a retreat to customers leaving behind the chaos of daily life.

- Restaurants present an opportunity to enjoy an experience, appreciate ambiance and food together, and to relish the familiar conversation of friends and family.

- Airports and rail stations now reach out to visitors with inviting choices in retail, food and business center offerings.

Customer perceptions of these public places are crafted by the inno-

vative execution of the owner's message and brand. The full story is expressed not only in the words and phrases of the brand, but in the form of the customer space: its color palette, reference imagery, furnishings and details.

Message as Inspiration.

Understanding what a particular space needs to communicate to its customers and users is the first step before considering architectural expressions. This is done by investigating the client's business goals and considering the brand message that needs to be conveyed through physical space. Aim high. By aligning customer needs – for convenience, escape, entertainment, experience – with the business goals of the client, architecture can inspire action and commerce.

By uncovering the experiences customers most value, aligning those aspirations with client business goals, and adding a healthy dose of inspiration, architecture will have enormous impact on bottom line profits. It all starts with the conviction, by architect and client together, that customers will seek out and return to favored places where the message fits their expectations and their visit results in a positive experience.

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