

White Paper

The Flawless Interior

Seeing your facility through the eyes of a newcomer

Architectural Products

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Executive Summary

The overall condition of a facility speaks volumes to not only those who live and work there, but also to visitors and potential users. The old adage is: You only get one chance to make a good first impression.

A shabby interior space, poor maintenance, even unpleasant odors can have potential money-paying customers turning on their heels and heading out the door.

We all understand the real-world needs for value engineering when new construction or major renovation project budgets get pinched. However oftentimes, expenditure cuts made on a first-cost basis can have significant long-term impacts on a facility's appearance.

This white paper explores how everyone responsible for how a new building lasts long-term – architects, interior designers, contractors and building owners and facility staff – should take a long-term view when it comes to door and wall protection products as preventative “medicine” to keep facilities looking good long after the ribbon cutting.

Every facility through the eyes of a newcomer

We begin with asking you to follow this line of logic: Much of the following advice is drawn from two experienced senior housing administrators¹. Now before you dismiss our thesis as “This doesn’t apply to me,” hold on.

We believe the advice offered by Phyllis Thornton and Christine Wirthwein fits for any facility catering to a consuming public, and it all hinges on this key statement:



Take a tour of your facility with the eye of a newcomer and you’ll notice dozens of consumer turnoffs, from scarred doorjams and soiled carpet, to hand-lettered signs taped to the walls.

¹ This excerpt is taken from the breakthrough book: ***Inside Advice on Marketing Senior Housing – The 15 Critical Components of Success***. Touted as “the formula for full occupancy” the volume is chockfull of sage advice from two seasoned experts in senior housing administration and marketing – Phyllis Thornton and Christine Wirthwein.

Substitute “your facility” with “your hospital,” “your clinic,” “your senior building,” “your hotel,” “your office building,” “your school,” or “your store” and you get the picture.

The Flawless Interior

The physical appearance of your building speaks volumes about the quality that’s inside. It’s tricky to sell a high-ticket item if the product doesn’t look the part.

Some environmental imperfections are design or age related, such as long travel distances from the rooms to amenity areas, or dark, poorly lit hallways. They can also be the result of budgetary chokeholds that show up in multiple ways—from the absence of decorative accessories and special touches to run-down furnishings that should have been retired long ago.

However, most interior appearance flaws are those we create and tolerate. While sales representatives like to present their facilities as “the ideal place,” imperfections can give the place a look that’s a little too lived-in.

Those charged with marketing a facility and its services are often frustrated because it seems they are the only ones who see the building’s environmental imperfections and they’re always carping about what needs to be cleaned up, or scurrying around picking up to prepare for an appointment. Doesn’t anyone else notice that the dining table condiment containers could use a thorough cleaning?

These fixable imperfections occur for various reasons. It may be because staff knows what to do, but gets away with doing less. This can be especially true in older buildings that have tired interiors. Work standards become relaxed. Staff feels it’s impossible to make an old building sparkle and a few shortcuts here and there won’t be noticed. Sometimes, staff has lost sight of what the building should look like. Coming to the same place day after day, they may not see the fingerprints on the glass front door, the scuff marks on the walls, or the messy bulletin board.

Or a building’s imperfections could be because everyone has a different standard or interpretation of what constitutes a clean and orderly environment. What one individual sees as clutter, disarray, or dirt may go unnoticed by another. The varied and sometimes scary appearance of staff offices is a great example of the “diversity in cleanliness” concept.

Whatever the reasons for a building's poor appearance, you can be sure the customer sees it. It's not the newness of a building that counts in making the best impression—it's good housekeeping and maintenance. So how does a building consistently present a top-notch setting? The first step is to find and correct simple-to-solve presentation problems: remove the hand-lettered signs taped to walls and doors, replace stained ceiling tiles, and touch up doorjambs and baseboards with a fresh coat of paint.

The next step is to define the standards of excellence for the building's presentation to the public — what the environment should look like and what to avoid, down to the details of making sure furniture is properly placed, newspapers are picked up, and lamp shades are straightened.

The need to have a plan that pays attention to the details is best summed up by the remark made by a resident who had just moved into a new senior-living community: “Just because this place is new doesn't mean it couldn't use a little soap and water now and then. I can't believe no one bothers to sweep the entrance every day.”

Of course, the key to presentation success lies in training frontline staff to see and solve the problems. This is one aspect of customer service training where practical exercises add impact and fun to the learning experience. For example, have staff from every department take a tour of your building and offer a prize to the person who discovers and offers solutions to the most barriers.

This walk around in-service combined with in-class training reinforces the concept that keeping the building clean and presentable is everyone's job, not just housekeeping and maintenance.

How Door and Wall Protection can help

We would interject here that door and wall protection can and should be part of the building tour suggested above.

Just to establish a common ground, let's define door and wall protection. A good list of products can be found in CSI MasterFormat Division 10 26 00 - Wall and Door Protection:

- Corner Guards
- Bumper Guards/Wall Guards
- Bumper Rails
- Protective Corridor Handrails
- Protective Wall Covering - rigid polymer sheet, solid surface wall cladding, flexible protective wall covering
- Door and Frame Protection - kickplates, door frame guards

The colors, material, textures and impact-resistance levels of these products offer designers and facility staff limitless options to enhance the aesthetics of a facility's interior, while delivering needed protection.

Certainly, many of Thornton and Wirthwein's suggested "fixes" are easy to do – take down the hand-lettered signs taped to the wall, etc. But, oftentimes the shabbiness that slowly overtakes a building's interior tends to result from a misconception of just how much traffic and abuse certain areas of the building can absorb.

For example, an unsightly, repetitive spackle, patch and paint spot in a corridor hall could be due to the fact that particular corridor is right across from a laundry storage space or food preparation area – maybe no one thought about the frequency and weight of carts sailing out of that space and into the wall.

The next section talks about how spending a few pennies of door and wall protection saves a pound of "cure" when it comes to keeping a building's interior looking newer longer.

Common Sense ROI

When it comes to the world of construction, renovation and maintenance, it seems you can't open a magazine these days without coming across at least one article on the topic of Return on Investment (ROI). Putting it plainly, ROI means justifying or rejecting a proposed expense - or "investment" - based on what you will gain.

Thanks to the good folks at Investopedia.com, we found a fairly simple formula:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{(\text{Gain from Investment} - \text{Cost from Investment})}{\text{Cost of Investment}}$$

However, then Investopedia adds the following explanation:

Keep in mind that the calculation for return on investment can be modified to suit the situation - it all depends on what you include as returns and costs ... This flexibility has a downside, as ROI calculations can be easily manipulated to suit the user's purposes, and the result can be expressed in many different ways, when using this [formula] make sure you understand what inputs are being used.

Ah, there's the rub, as Shakespeare put it. So, when figuring ROI, there are two hurdles to overcome:

- How do I account for all the costs?
- How do I determine what I will gain?

The easy stuff: Time and materials

The reason you choose to install door and wall products is to cut down on visible damage and keep surfaces looking new. The inputs - we'll call them costs - of installing door-and-wall protection products are as follows: time and materials. Any maintenance supervisor or carpenter who's worth his or her salt can take a pencil and do a pretty quick back-of-the-envelope calculation to figure the total time and materials cost of a project.

That really is the easy part. But, what most people don't dial into their calculations are the hidden costs - those things you don't always think about when facing a building or renovation issue. We want to help you by giving you a list of the most-frequently forgotten costs, and what you gain by keeping them in mind.

Hidden Cost #1 - The Chronic Do-Over

Just about every facility has that handful of areas that are constantly getting bashed and slammed. Usually it's a door or door frame, a corner or a section of wall in high-traffic corridors or lobbies. If the damage is in a public space, you don't want to leave it looking wrecked, so someone on the staff is assigned to repair the door, corner or wall ... again ... and again ... and again.

So, doing a little ballpark figuring, let's say that a corner, including dry wall and painting repair, gets fixed three times a year. By the time the workman:

- Loads up the work cart
- Pulls the materials
- Moves to the damaged area
- Preps the area (including putting up dust barriers)
- Tears out the old
- Cuts and installs the patch

- Preps and paints or covers the wall
- Cleans up the area (including dismantling the dust barrier)
- Moves back to the maintenance or carpentry shop
- Unpacks the work cart and discards the scrap ...

How much time - in dollars - are we talking about? Oh yeah, don't forget the time lost while he or she goes back to the shop because somebody didn't put the #5%!* box of drill bits back where it belongs! What are we talking? Maybe \$150 each repair. Now, multiply that by 3 repairs a year and you're talking \$450 or more.

GAIN: Install one high-impact corner guard at a typical price of \$25 (in just a few minutes) and you're \$425 in the black, and that's on labor alone. Say that corner guard stays in place for five years; then you're \$2,125 to the good.

Hidden cost #2 - Lost opportunity

As far as we know, there has been no government research project launched to clone skilled tradesmen and women. That means: if a workman or carpenter is assigned to fix that chronic problem corner it means there's some other project that goes undone.

As an example, a school in our area sent around a painter on a rolling stool every month to touch up the paint on all the school's door frames. That maintenance chore was scratched off the list once they installed custom-formed frame guards.

GAIN: Less fix-ups means freeing staff for bigger, more-important projects.

Hidden Cost #3 - A bad first impression means lost revenue, image

Here's the scenario: You're the rental manager at 1212 Union Square, a 10-story office building, and you're touring a prospective tenant and her staff. As you make your way to the rental space, your group passes through public area of the building where the overall décor is looking worn or damaged. Things seem to be really clicking ... everyone smiles and shakes hands as the tour ends, and you promise to call in a few days to follow-up.

A few days later you call the prospect to see if they're ready to come in and sign an agreement, and you receive a gentle, but firm, "No, I've decide to move into New Commerce Center." You're confused. After all, the prospect and staff members seemed to really like your place ... "We all smiled, we all shook hands!"

Then you remember your mom's or dad's advice before your first job interview: "You don't get a second chance to make a good first impression. Go shine your shoes!"

This scenario is a double loss for the facility: Not only did they not gain the resident (lost revenue) they also now have several people out in the building who are telling all their family, friends, co-workers and bowling buddies about the "terrible conditions at 1212 Union Square." Sure, it's unfair of them to judge your entire facility from one little hallway or area, but that's just human nature: People will see what they want to see and judge what they want to judge.

Here's where it gets scary: Word of mouth has now gone electronic. Think of websites like Trip Advisor.com, where thousands of people who have stayed at hotels and motels file reviews of their experiences. There's practically a consumer review website for just about everything. One bad experience can now be shared globally.

GAIN: By using door and wall protection products, you maintain a clean, well-kept appearance that translates into a more-marketable facility and positive impressions within the building.

You see? It's not rocket science. Using a little common sense, you can figure out the kind of return you gain from an investment in products that keep your facility looking newer and cleaner longer.

Cutting first costs often kicks damage problems "down the road"

Decisions made every day by architects and building owners about interior protection elements have a lasting impact on how the facility will look after it's occupied. Unless the real costs of those elements are factored into the decision-making process, facility owners will continue to trade long-term performance for short-term savings.

A common practice in new construction and renovation projects is to focus on first costs. Every project has a budget, and keeping the project within that budget is an important element of ensuring a successful project

However, as facility budgets dwindle it is more important than ever to keep life-cycle costing in mind when designing a project.

Real-life example: A major retail chain did not dial interior protection into their construction standards for their new stores. Almost like clockwork, about six months after the grand opening, the store manager calls to complain of battered checkout lanes, scratched

walls and halls in the fitting rooms, etc. The manager's tale of woe inevitably ends with: "I need some corner guards, wall guards and cart bumpers."

The consideration of life-cycle costing vs. first-time costs enhances user satisfaction, while reducing costs over the long term.

Elevators are interiors, too

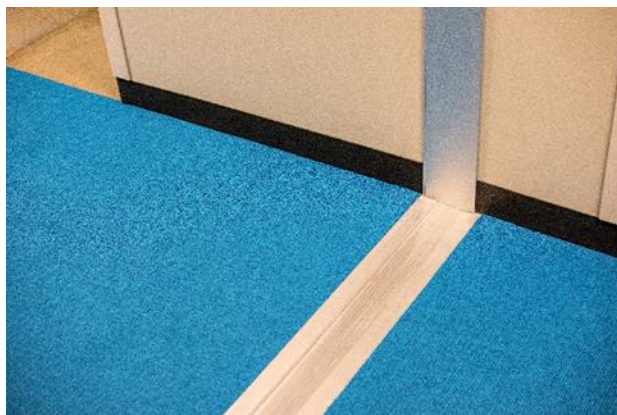
Over time, elevator interiors can get damaged ... especially if the cab is used for both passengers and freight. Even with the best padded intentions, freight and furniture movers and delivery drivers ding up, gouge and scuff walls with dollies, carts and crates.

Then there's the simple aesthetics - styles change and a cab's interior can start to look dated. Throw in damage and it's a one-two punch of ugly. Then add in flickering fluorescent bulbs and it's the trifecta of a not-so-pleasant ride.

During your Audit walk-around, poke your head into every elevator and take a 3D spherical look around.



A final word about expansion joints



renovation.

You may not even know that your building has them ... but just about every building does. The often-overlooked expansion joint helps your building handle the rigors of thermal and seismic movement. During your Audit, take a look at the expansion joint covers. You might be surprised by the amount of wear and tear these workhorses endure - after several years of hard traffic, the joint covers could end up pretty battered. Oftentimes, a simple cover plate retrofit can be the icing on an interior

In summary ...

Science teaches us that matter moves from order to disorder. Amazingly, the same thing can happen to buildings! What once was sparkling and new can eventually slide into disrepair.

Building owners could simply surrender to it, or they can proactively take a stand and fight for their buildings. By looking at a building “through the eyes of a newcomer,” they can uncover areas that need to be spruced up to return the building to like-new condition. Even better, they can choose products that protect the interior from damage in the first place.

Architects and interior designers can slow the hands of time by thinking long term and specifying door and wall protection products ... to not only preserve their design, but also as a service to building owners long after the ribbon is cut.

Architectural Product Categories

IPC® **Door + Wall Protection**

ASCEND® **Elevator Protection**

JUNIPER™ **Commercial Window Treatments**

CLICKEZE® **Privacy Systems**

ENDURANT® **Washroom Systems**

SIGNSCAPE® **Architectural Signage**

JOINTMASTER® **Expansion Joint Systems**

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