

Dirt Subverts Luxury Appeal

Lobby's Largest Surface Underscores Image

By Dawn Shoemaker

VISITORS TO ANY BUILDING – including prospective renters – typically get a first impression from the lobby. Although it might be seen as wasted space that generates no revenue, the lobby imparts messages about quality, upkeep and vigilance. Some studies have found that visitors size up a property in about four seconds, based on the look of the lobby.

In an effort to wow observers, building owners and their designers are opting for amenities such as striking lighting treatments, indoor waterfalls, fireplaces, atriums, large windows looking out on open spaces such as plazas, and customized fabrics, upholstery, and furniture designs that are made as much for flair as for durability.

However, as many formerly iconic buildings illustrate, finishes and furnishings can become dated and worn or – in the worst case scenario – dusty and dirty. Flooring, in particular, can undermine the overall ambience as it ages and deteriorates.

“The lighting, the atriums, the indoor waterfalls are all eye-catching, but it can all be lost if the largest surface in the lobby is soiled or unsightly – and that’s the floor,” asserts Gary Pelphrey, General Manager of Powr-Flite Direct, a manufacturer of professional cleaning equipment.

Stone-based floors such as granite or marble are often found in lobbies because they are durable, while conveying a sense of luxury. This type of flooring is typically so highly polished that additional gloss treatments are unnecessary, and it may simply require a sealant or impregnator to protect the surface.

Even so, cleaning and maintenance is critical to keep the stone floor looking its best at all times. Pelphrey recommends a regular regime:

- Sweep, dust mop or vacuum lobby floors daily and throughout the day depending on traffic and use. To protect indoor air quality, some custodial departments select backpack vacuum cleaners with

HEPA filtration systems to vacuum floors instead of sweeping or dust mopping.

- Damp mop/wet mop marble and stone with a neutral cleaner or a cleaner approved or recommended by the floor’s manufacturer/installer.
- Clean up all spills immediately. This ensures building safety and eliminates potential stains, which can require costly maintenance to remove.
- Periodically scrub floors to remove more deeply embedded soils. An automatic scrubber that cleans, scrubs, rinses and dries floors all in one pass is designed for

this kind of job. Managers should select a cordless machine for safety reasons.

As stone floors age, more intensive rehabilitation will likely be necessary. “Unlike other types of floors, they typically cannot be stripped and refinished to restore gloss levels. Instead, managers are advised to call in professionals trained specifically in stone restorative care, and it can be a very delicate process,” Pelphrey explains. ■

Dawn Shoemaker is a freelance writer for the professional cleaning, building, education, and hospitalities industries.

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