Reinvesting in Hotel Design
Embrace the opportunities

With renewed sources of capital, hotel owners, operators and brands are investing again—seizing the opportunity to keep properties fresh and to stay competitive. Cautious optimism reigns and budgets remain tight, so properties must prioritize spending to maximize ROI. These are some of the updates hotels are (or should be) spending money on.

Restored consumer confidence and business spending is bringing capital back to the hotel market sooner than many anticipated. Global and Irish hotel revenue per available room (RevPAR) is on the rise.

Invest in Real Estate Development

Lower real estate prices and higher levels of inventory, especially distressed properties, means global hotel acquisitions are predicted to increase 15% to 20% to about $30 billion in 2011 as real estate investors react to rising occupancy and room rates. The volume of deals is expected to rise the fastest in Europe, Middle East and Africa—an increase of as much as 25%.

Adaptive reuse of non-traditional properties such as vacant office space also poses opportunities in growth markets. 

Source: Jones Lang LaSalle

Align Brand Positioning

Influenced by the economy and inspired by what many call the Responsibility Revolution, consumers’ priorities have shifted, and brands face the necessity of re-aligning with more current consumer trends: authenticity, value, community and connection. In fact, 62% of global consumers would switch brands if a different brand of similar quality supported a good cause, as serving a purpose becomes a more significant part of the marketing mix than ever before. 

Source: Edelman goodpurpose® Study
Renovate Property

Renovation is required for many properties—whether due to new ownership, re-flagging, property improvement plans (PIPs) or simply age—and can be implemented all at once or in phases. Public lobbies are renovated to offer a more flexible, comfortable, living room lounge, while upgraded spaces like meeting and conference rooms offer opportunities for increased event revenue. Back-of-house renovations improve operational efficiencies and maximize the use of real estate. And guest room renovations enhance customer comfort and loyalty.

Adaptive Reuse of Buildings for new Hotels

Adaptive reuse—the art and design science of reinventing buildings—occupies a small but powerful niche within the larger world of hotel development. It’s powerful because it gives hoteliers a way into otherwise impenetrable urban centres.

It also gives them a road less travelled. Let’s face it, turning a former office building (or warehouse or theatre) from the 1930s into a hotel demands not only creativity but an open mind. It demands that hoteliers “restart” their engines. By that, I mean redefining their expectations and their set of “givens” in a way that ground-up construction and/or renovation of existing hotel stock does not require. And did I mention the need for (really) over-the-top design thinking?

For instance, in an adaptive reuse project, a brand’s standard roster of room types may need to be tweaked and expanded to respond to the existing building’s physical constraints, which include structural columns, beams, elevator cores, existing stairs, loading docks, exterior windows and floor-to-floor heights. Traditional hotel space planning may need to be tossed, as well. Spaces may need to be rethought/reconfigured to fit the program elements into the existing architectural shell while simultaneously providing superb guest experiences and operational efficiency. Same with the usual formula for performance. It may need to be revised to account for these planning and construction adjustments.

- **Is it right for both of you?** First and foremost, you’ve got to figure out the most appropriate use for the building in question, a new life that will best take advantage of its bones and character. Not all fatigued (or otherwise ill
at ease) office buildings make viable hotels. Consider what’s best for the building first—and then whether you belong in its future.

**Change management.** Adaptive reuse means you, too, have to adapt. The building’s not doing all of the changing. Columns, beams and elevator cores don’t move nicely. Your vision can. You need to be creative in your space planning and addition of room types to accommodate the restrictions dictated by the building. Challenges can turn into opportunities for creating something special.

**Brand management.** Although the existing building drives much of an adaptive reuse development, your brand should do the critical steering. Ultimately, the project should be a beautiful melding of the two. In the end, though, the interior design is what weaves the brand into the depths of the building. It’s done with color, materials, furniture and fixtures that marry building and brand.

**Boost Sustainability**

95% of business travellers believe the hospitality industry should be undertaking green initiatives, and 52% indicate a willingness to pay more for rooms that enable guests to reduce their carbon footprint. So green hotels increasingly attract conscientious consumers as well as corporate meeting planners with social responsibility standards to meet. Enhancements such as efficient lighting, low-flow water fixtures and solar equipment can greatly reduce operational costs without cuts to customer service.

*Sources: Deloitte Hospitality 2015; Hotel Association of Canada*

Hospitality brands have made sustainable practices part of their brand and offering. Now health and wellness are in their sights. Wellness is more than access to a spa or fitness centre. It can mean guest rooms that encourage yoga, exercise, and meditation, for example, and design choices, toiletry selections, room-service menus, and mini-bar snacks that reflect a health consciousness.
Refresh Technology

Global consumers have become accustomed to instant—and constant—access to information everywhere they go, and hotel destinations are no different. Upgrading infrastructure in order to provide uninterrupted access has become imperative, with travellers indicating that wireless internet is the top “must have” amenity. Similarly, hotels are using tools like iPad concierge, room service apps, property management systems and social networking to improve communications both internally and externally.

*Source: J.D. Power & Associates*

Upgrade Food & Beverage

As chef-driven cuisine and cooking networks raise customer expectations, and as 71% of adults say they try to eat healthier when dining out, food trends such as locally sourced and sustainable ingredients, kids’ nutrition, and gluten free diets resonate throughout the hospitality industry. Many diners increasingly choose unique establishments with local ties, and enhanced bar and lounge areas can increase foot traffic by their appeal to local residents as well as hotel guests.

*Source: National Restaurant Association*

A hotel is often a traveller’s first link to the city. Today’s market offers unrivalled opportunities to improve those connections.
Leisure as an Experience

Leisure today is all about experience. And while high-end hotels and resorts actively seek an affair of the heart with their clientele, brands at every price point have customer loyalty in mind. This has led a few of them to sell their hotels (often at record prices) and focus exclusively on delivering the quality of experience that their brands imply. Even as hospitality brands seek to differentiate themselves, their clientele is converging in interesting ways. The young influence their elders (think iPods and business casual), and the distinction between travel for business or pleasure is much less relevant. People increasingly want to combine the two.

Multitasking as a lifestyle

Hotels are not just a place to sleep now, but also an integral part of a richer scene. This is why shopping and hotels are joined at the hip. Retail is often an element of new hotel development, while “lifestyle centres” street like outdoor malls are putting hotel rooms in with their existing mix of retail and restaurants. Add meeting venues and you have all the makings of a self-contained urban environment. The energy and activity it generates has become a key part of the hotel experience.

Letting people escape and unwind

Formality used to be the order of the day for business hotel dining and meeting spaces. No more. Business is conducted now in less formal settings, so hoteliers are shifting gears. “It’s not just about making people comfortable they want to be able to escape. That means giving them places where they can really unwind. These are revenue generators, of course, but they’re also redefining the hotel experience.” In smaller hotels, the same idea might surface as a roof deck with a cool bar and a plunge pool, or a Zen garden terrace with a day spa attached. The bathtub is now a piece of furniture, Bathing is moving into the guest room proper, making the space feel larger and more interactive.”
Bars and restaurants remain a hospitality mainstay, but with an emerging difference: trend-setting hoteliers are seeking out the unique. Wine bars and microbreweries are two ways that hotels are accentuating the local while providing a familiar service. There’s a new emphasis on providing an ambiance that speaks to “location, location, location” while still channelling elements—and benefits—of the parent brand. The strategy makes the hotel a draw for locals, and their presence helps give it a cosmopolitan sense of being part of the area and its scene.

Travellers want to feel plugged-in, but they also want privacy and comfort. This has led to the rise of the VIP area—whether it’s a cabana, a private club or dining room, or a cordoned-off space in a bar. For operators, it can be lucrative. Frequent business travellers will often spend more for the ability to mix urbanity with exclusivity. It’s less about celebrity, though, and more about relaxing in company of the so-called “kinetic elite.” It’s also another way for hotels to keep their best customers coming back.

Behind all of this is the increasing agglomeration of entertainment and hospitality. Las Vegas has been phenomenally successful in this, blending leisure activities and then creating synergy among them. Others in the leisure sector are taking notice. This doesn’t mean we’ll see Vegas-like entertainment everywhere, but it reveals the increasing fluidity between different kinds of leisure—as well as between work and leisure.

The vibrant mix of uses that results makes for lively places, and economically healthy ones, too. The long-term return on investment of traditional hotel rooms can be balanced by Retail’s more immediate cash flow.
Hotel Lobby Design

Walking into a hotel lobby is like shaking the hand of someone you just met. It’s all about the first impression. Just like people, hotel lobbies embody distinct personalities. A lobby can be aloof, inviting, intimidating, or unbelievably cool. As an hotelier, you cannot stand by your front door greeting all the guests that make their way onto your property, but you can choreograph initial experiences by transforming your lobby into an oasis.

The best lobbies create a refuge for the tourist, for the business traveller, for the couple enjoying a weekend getaway. Lobbies blend the best of form and function - they anticipate the needs of your guests and introduce your sense of style. Within moments of entering your hotel, guests brand your hotel as trendy, chic, cheap, or luxurious. They step into this public space immediately upon crossing the threshold - so, take this opportunity to make a powerful first impression on your guests.

In today’s competitive hospitality industry, hoteliers constantly work to come up with elements that turn their next visitors into repeat guests. In especially tough economic times, travellers are tightening their budgets. In response, hoteliers need to identify smart solutions that keep guests booking stays.

Focus on what pleases your guests - create a special oasis.

- **Analyse your potential guests:** If you are going to create a lobby space that draws in new guests, it is essential to develop a good understanding of who your guests are. If your target demographic is a family on vacation, think about putting an ice cream stand or a play area in your lobby. If your target demographic is vacationing couples, consider a romantic lounge or fire within the space. Your goal is to delight your guest with a welcoming area they never knew they wanted - and can't imagine missing on their trip.
Create a unique environment: You want your property to stand out, to offer something different. The lobby is the perfect area to establish your hotel's personality. Make a statement, develop a particular style, and set the scene for your guests. Make your lobby more than a passageway from the outside world to their rooms. Create an environment that makes your guests want to stop, see, and do things. Give them thought-provoking or inspirational art to look at, mood-appropriate and well-designed lighting, and an environment that invites them to linger and relax.

Tie experience with function: Not only must your lobby house the traditional check-in desk, waiting area, and concierge stand, but it should serve as a social gathering place with auxiliary seating and tables. Develop a space specifically for business travellers that houses laptop ports, printers, and phones. Offer kiosks to check-in to flights. If space permits, section off another area for guests looking for somewhere to socialize with others. If possible, tie this space in with the hotel bar, and place chairs and tables in a configuration that invites your guests to mingle. Think beyond the traditional lobby, and even the simplest enhancements create added ambiance.

Incorporate revenue streams: Create a lobby that provides a variety of shops and services. When guests conveniently enjoy amenities they want right in your lobby, you get one more chance to increase the revenue as well. Even a boutique property can serve coffee, stock a snack bar, and sell gifts or toiletries. Guests appreciate the convenience of in-house offerings and unexpected retail experiences, eliminating the need to shop elsewhere. Give them one more reason to stay in the hotel and experience every aspect it has to offer.

Analyse the layout and architecture: Take a close look at the structure of your lobby. Something too large may seem uninviting, while a small, cramped space discourages guests from lingering. Because lobbies are typically wide-open spaces, take advantage of the area and create zones that seamlessly flow together to create a cohesive experience. Each zone can serve a purpose and fulfil specific guest needs. Also focus on the architecture of the space. Work to match the era of the hotel with the lobby and play with the style as you introduce furniture and accessories. A luxurious hotel begs for a lavish lobby. A family resort destination might feature child-size tables, chairs, and activities in the lobby. Tie these elements into the architectural style of the space.
Catching the Flavour

Many hotels aim to stand out by celebrating their roots in the community. Providing a back story is part of this, especially for established properties. New ones trade on their cachet, with amenities that draw locals as well as visitors. Knowledge of the terrain and a reflected sense of place are differentiators that add to the guest experience. Creativity and authenticity always win points.

Health Is the New Green

Hospitality brands have made sustainable practices part of their brand and offering. Now health and wellness are in their sights. Wellness is more than access to a spa or fitness centre. It can mean guest rooms that encourage yoga, exercise, and meditation, for example, and design choices, toiletry selections, room-service menus, and mini-bar snacks that reflect a health consciousness.

Innovation Desired

With more competition in this sophisticated and rapidly maturing market, choice is up and prices are coming down. That's driving experimentation: new brands, new lifestyles, and new designs. At the high end, the focus is on creating something special and memorable—the kinds of settings that lead to return visits.
About

DOYLE + PARTNERS

With ever-changing design trends, technology and competition within the industry, hotel owners and operators are focused on creating unique experiences that leave the guests relaxed, renewed and eager for more. D + P works with hoteliers to design memorable travel experiences for their guests. We approach green hospitality as an opportunity to fulfil guests’ needs and desires while enhancing comfort and convenience. Our approach draws on our insights into specific guest preferences, values and behaviours to create hotels that are welcoming, versatile, and enduring.

Doyle + Partners Hospitality Practice partners with hotel brands and developers to reposition existing properties and create new ones that are poised to succeed as the pace of change quickens and customer demands continue to evolve.

Design Services -

- Architectural Design
- Brand Strategy & Graphic Design
- Interior Design
- Sustainability Consulting

Hospitality Practice Leaders

CONTACT
Philip Doyle – Design Director
Business Opportunities - Hospitality + Retail
087 3149563
philip@doyleandpartners.ie
Design Studio -
Fumbally Exchange
5 Dame Lane
Dublin 2.
Projects

A range of projects that the partners in Doyle + Partners has designed and worked on while working in previous Architecture companies are sampled below.

Monart Hotel and Spa, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford.
Bedroom Design
Spa Design

Whites Hotel, Wexford Town, Co Wexford
Restaurant Design
Reception Design
Bar Design,
Cafe Design
Spa and Wellness area Design

Establishment Hotel, Sydney Australia
Bedroom Design
Lobby Design
Restaurant Design
Bar Design

Landmark Hotel, Leitrim
Bar Design
Cafe Design
Lobby Design
Restaurant Design

Carton House Hotel, Co Kildare
Bedrooms
Restaurant Design
Bar Design

Buchament Bay Resort, Barbaydos

Sheraton Hotel, Athlone

Sheraton Hotel, Moscow
Whites Hotel, Lobby and reception - Wexford Town
Landmark Hotel, Cafe bar
Landmark Hotel Lobby and VIP bar
Establishment Hotel, Sydney Australia, Bedrooms, Lobby
Establishment Hotel, Sydney Australia, Bar, Restaurant