

DesignInnovations

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REFURBISHMENT SOLUTIONS TO BUILD YOUR HOTEL BUSINESS

How to finance the ultimate refurb

Encouraging guests to eat in-house

Kitchen Confidential
12 cost-effective ways to increase covers

Beating the Ban

Sensible solutions for guests who smoke



Spa Wars

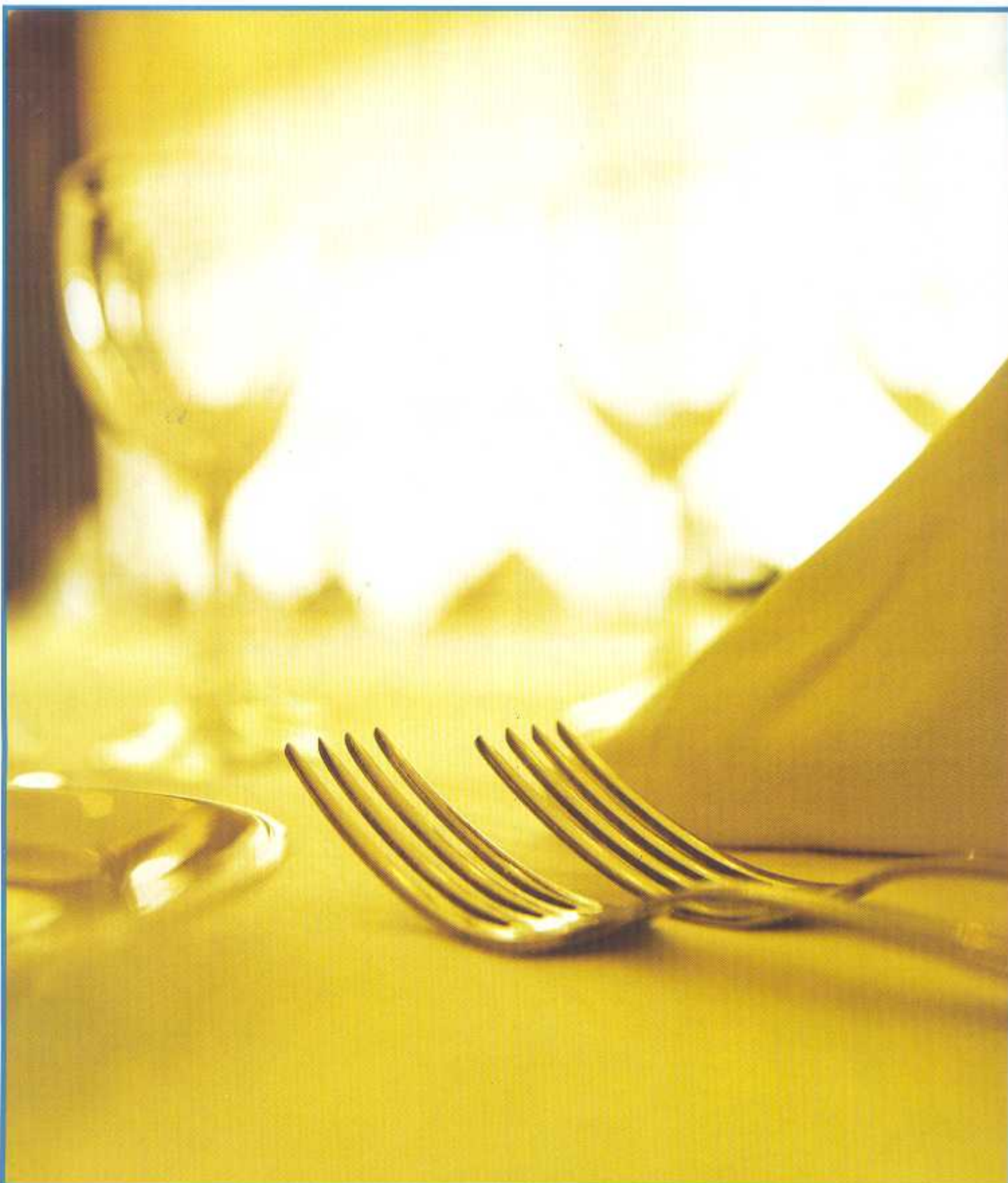
Why even the smallest property can boost its profits



Back to Basics

What guests really want from a hotel bedroom





Eat and Drink in Style

A well-designed bar and restaurant can help you to maximise your food and beverage revenue, and if you want to beat your competitors, it's important to make these areas extra special

Once a guest has checked-in, whether his stay is motivated by business obligations, or by a family holiday, you have an advantage over your competitors. Is there anything more enjoyable, after a day of meetings, or hitting the town for the usual tourist visits, than being able to pop downstairs for a quick drink and a meal?

Your advantage is proximity. It will take time for a guest to research and find – especially in an unknown town – a decent place for a snack, a chat over a glass of wine, or a cup of tea. However, this does not mean that guests will always prefer your hotel to another venue, so it is essential to put together a tempting offer.

Maximising Revenues

When staying in a hotel, people expect a high standard. And, if you are not able to provide this in your bar and restaurant, there is a strong probability that your customers will prefer a little stroll round the city to find a place that satisfies their needs.

Of course, the food you offer, the rapidity with which it is served, the quality of your drink offer, as well as a polite and efficient staff will certainly help to keep the customers in-house, but these are secondary. Guests only face your food and drink offer and quality of service when the decision to stay has already been taken.

This means the primary consideration will be design. If the bar and restaurant look nice, tidy and welcoming, customers are more likely to choose you over the alternative. Why would they go looking somewhere else if everything looks perfect just here?

Andy Powell, managing director of Spacetailors, a company specialising in retail, leisure and hotel interiors, says, "Fundamentally, it is the revenue that the bar and restaurant areas can bring to a hotel that is important as they provide an extra source of income. Hotels try to cater for all customer needs in order to keep them within the property spending money. They don't want to lose this to neighbouring establishments.

"The purpose these areas serve, beyond increasing the revenue, is to create guest satisfaction by providing care. It gives customers all the facilities and requirements they may have within one building, hence making the property more attractive to prospective customers too," he adds.

It is important to design an environment in which guests will want to stay, otherwise you might miss out. In the long run, an unattractive bar and restaurant might even be a drag on your reputation and could see you lose customers.

Target Market

However, there is no single path to success and each establishment should identify the needs of its guests. Powell explains, "It is hard to know what atmosphere will please people. A boutique hotel may be minimalist in design whilst a country hotel may opt for a more homely, rich furnishing approach.

"Any hotel should know its clientèle and consider this when completing a refurb. Asking customers for their opinion may be one way to achieve this, as would

Seeing Clearly

Pascal Dowers, of lighting specialists, Greenwich Village, explains how to make the most of your bar and restaurant

Why is it important to consider lighting in the refurbishment plans?

Lighting has an important atmospheric influence on any domestic or business environment. It can set moods and also highlights important key points of interest. Good lighting makes people relaxed, bad lighting can make them feel vulnerable and uncomfortable.

What are the criteria to consider?

There are a few fundamental things to consider when approaching the question of lighting, such as exciting feature pieces in prominent positions, attractive subtle lighting, as well as a more intimate atmosphere in some areas. Also, make sure great lights are visible from outside.

So, what's the best way to go about it?

Decide on your best points and exaggerate their influence on the space, be it interesting and exciting architectural points, furniture, or lighting features. Spend the money on areas that draw in punters and keep them. Exciting and clever lighting can encourage people to sit and stay.

What are the most common mistakes?

Boring lighting is one mistake that should be avoided. People demand far more excitement in their lives these days. They do not want to go into a bar that resembles their front room, office or a shopping centre. They go to feel alive.

What are your tips for a good lighting?

There is so much available at the moment and at good prices. I would favour feature lighting, but definitely go towards the quality end for these. To save money, you will have to prioritise correctly. An expensive light in the right place can save you thousands elsewhere, even on decorative finishing costs and furniture.



checking with staff for their views on what elements are important to the hotel's core market."

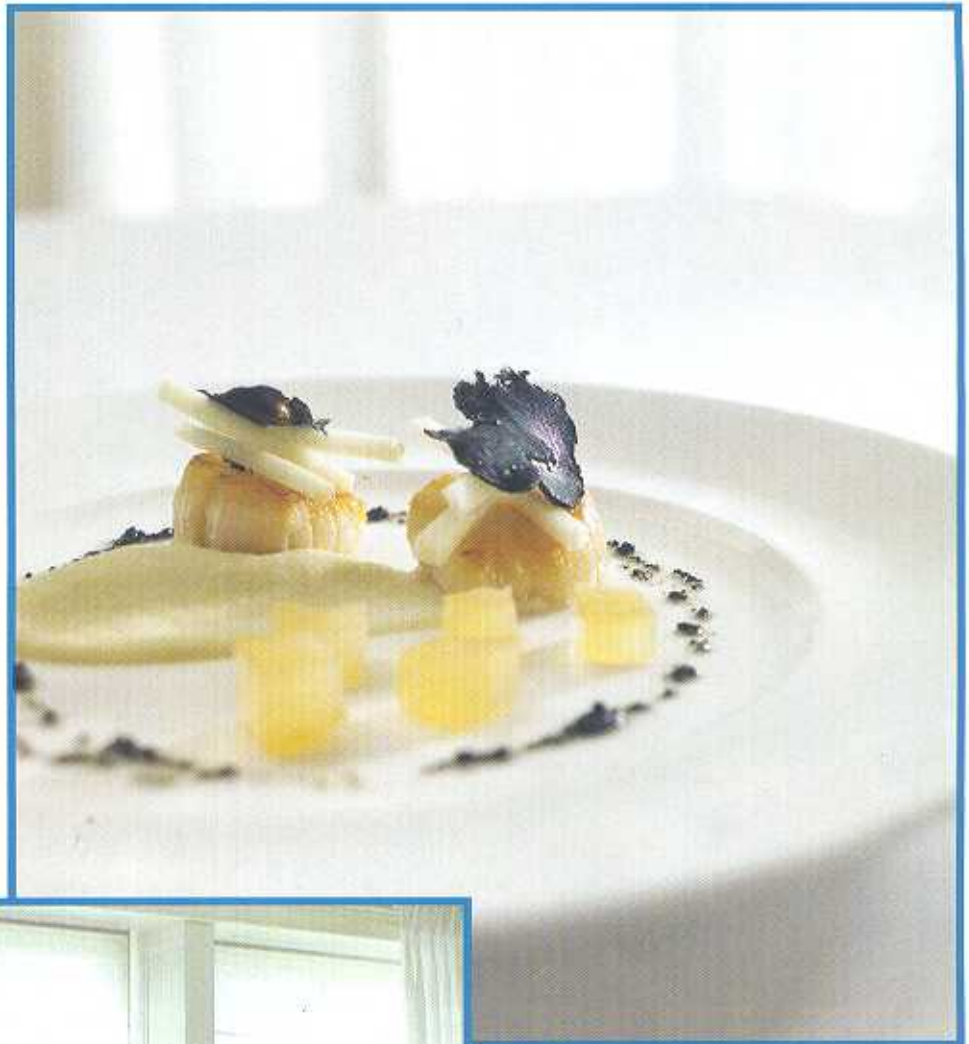
At the Seaham Hall hotel, part of Tom's Companies, the refurbishment of the restaurant area had to be treated seriously, as it is the only property in the north east to have been awarded a Michelin star in over a decade.

Jocelyn Maxfield, co-owner of Tom's Companies, who participated in the design of all the interiors, explains, "The bar and restaurant are the centre of a hotel's social life and also represent an important food and beverage generator. It's where guests relax and where they come for a drink, or a bit of food. It was very important we kept our customers in mind when planning. The refurbishment has brightened and lifted the restaurant atmosphere."

During the project, durability, easy maintenance and atmosphere have been considered carefully so that the design could reflect the expectations of guests for whom the quality of the restaurant makes it a special occasion.

Do Not Disturb

In order to avoid problems, the revamp was carefully planned. Maxfield says, "We agreed the brief in conjunction with all heads of departments and the designer. Planning and good organisation, co-ordination of



At Seaham Hall, the bar and restaurant areas are an important revenue generator

departments and choosing the quietest time to carry out the work were very important to limit disturbance to guests.

"Of course, there will always be an element of clashing within the operation of the hotel, but as long as the customers are advised and all the departments are kept informed, the clashes and upheaval are minimised."

Powell adds, "The most effective way to complete a refurbishment swiftly is to either take the area completely out of action and set up temporary facilities elsewhere within the hotel or split down and do a section at a time.

"It is important to board up all areas when completing the revamp and also to, where possible, work out of hours. For many hotels, the optimum time would be weekdays during the middle of the day when there are fewer customers within the hotel.

"In addition, keeping the site attractive whilst the work is completed is also vital since guests still need to enjoy the hotel during this time and it is obviously beneficial to both the hotelier and the contractor if this is achieved."

It is also important to make health and safety your number one priority. The public must be protected through the whole refurbishment and this also applies to the smallest of projects. A number of elements make a project successful. Ultimately, in addition to great design, planning and taking care of reducing disturbance, the standard of work will have to be very high.