DesignInnovations

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ABC

REFURBISHMENT SOLUTIONS TO BUILD YOUR HOTEL BUSINESS

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Encouraging guests to eat in-house

Kitchen Confidential

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Beating the Ban
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Coming in from the Cold

With just months to go until the much-publicised ban on smoking in enclosed public spaces, now is the time to prepare your premises, advises Andy Powell

The design of interior spaces has always been a major consideration, but the impending smoking ban means your outdoor space could soon find itself ranked equally in this area, and as such, should be a key consideration when it comes to maximising your investment. Balancing the requirements of the ban with the needs of your smoking customers may seem like a conundrum, but there is no reason why there should not be a satisfactory resolution for all concerned. In addition, the new legislation may also bring with it additional business opportunities and hidden benefits.

Changes to the licensing laws have moved UK drinking habits into line with those in Europe, and a further move towards continental-style premises opens up many more opportunities, including the increased use of outdoor and patio areas, which present an ideal solution to the ban.

So, while smokers have resigned themselves to lighting up outdoors, they needn't be forced to seek shelter under a ramshackle covering next to the bins, and whether you plan to provide a simple porch with a table and chairs, or something more elaborate, you should be prepared.

If an outdoor area is thoughtfully designed, it will not only prove attractive to smokers, but will entice other customers outside too, providing a more convivial space and an attractive additional offer for your business. It need not be an eyesore and should be viewed as an asset.

Space Saving

Maximising the available space is another key factor. Careful forethought and good design could potentially add significant value to your business. The ergonomics of space you have available requires that you should make full use of it.

The timing of the ban is also favourable. Because it comes into force this June, the warm weather will provide the perfect opportunity to create an enticing alfresco environment. Going some way towards this means laying out the space you have, and thinking about how to provide a scene as comfortable as the interior of your hotel. What you put into that space, and how it is arranged, can make all the difference to the way your customers perceive it.

Gazebos are one way of providing a suitable shelter while adding to the overall aesthetic effect and environmental ambiance. A range of designs are available, with decorative sides and flame retardant coverings.

Simple Solutions

A gazebo can comprise a relatively simple and cost-effective provision, or be more elaborate in spreading to an almost marquee-style covering, alongside attractive surrounding gardens and ambient lighting for evenings. Partially covered and decorated pagodas are another option.

Adding patio heaters means that even when the weather is bad, it needn't be cold and even in the depths of winter you can provide an alternative and comfortable area for customers. With stylish furniture, fixtures and attractive lighting, the ambiance of even the smallest space can be transformed into a welcome area for all your guests.

New Opportunities

Getting it right could even attract more customers to your business. Whatever the nature of your premises, whether it be a coaching inn or a modern boutique hotel, there are many opportunities to extend the existing décor, or to create a new and different environment as a contrast to that already there.

An attractive environment will also encourage smokers to be more responsible in discarding their cigarette butts. Even bins can be accommodated in such a way as to disguise their real purpose, and can be carefully designed to add to the overall effect.

Remember that in accommodating the ban, whatever you choose to do will have an overall impact on your business. Giving it due consideration and approaching it as an opportunity will make a difference, and you could actually sail through without any downturn in business. You may even increase your profits.

• Andy Powell is managing director of specialist fit-out contractors, Spacetailors, www.spacetailors.co.uk.