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Limited budget? How to achieve big results from small changes with intelligent design

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Big changes for small *change*...

Putting in place a long term Strategic Development Plan (or Masterplan) is critical to steer any business toward ongoing success. However, grand visions can take time to execute and budgetary limitations often mean that they're rolled out over a period of years or sometimes decades.

Whilst it's easy to get swept up in grand visions of an overarching plan, the day to day viability of a business should never be ignored. This is particularly so in the hospitality industry.

We're often asked, "is it worth spending a small amount or should we wait until we can afford to undertake a larger phase of work?" The answer to this question is as simple as understanding if a first-time visitor came to your venue, are they likely to return?

Shiny and new isn't always best – some of the most loved venues are beyond trend. With homely, crafted and sustainable ideals they strike a chord with the younger demographic. It just may be that a smaller more affordable refresh project will have just the bang for buck that your venue needs.

Clever design doesn't have to break the bank. We use the term 'refresh' because it balances the expectations around the work to be done. A refresh is about taking stock of the aspects of the spaces that can be leveraged and highlighted to best effect. Once this is established, all other works are done to support those aspects and to minimise negative elements.

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Our top tips when considering a venue 'refresh':

- **First impressions count.** Consider a focus on the entry experience. Some attention around clear signage and décor with a warm softness will draw people in.
- **Consider re-invention of existing elements.** Refurbishing key furniture pieces, revitalising old terrazzo flooring or reusing existing grid ceilings with new inserts of plywood or felt acoustic tiles are just a few aspects that will firmly update the look and feel.
- **The importance of 'zoning' was discussed in an earlier [post](#).** Create impressions with clusters of new furniture that sit in harmony with your existing pieces. Consider some existing pieces for a refinish or recover – not every piece needs to be replaced in one go. This approach has the dual benefit ensuring not everything dates together giving the 'look' some additional longevity.
- **Lighting is a powerful element for a space and this element alone is the topic of a forthcoming article.** However giving the lighting attention in the refresh is a clever way to really super-charge your refresh. Lighting is a tool to draw attention to the very best of a space and give the side effect of down-playing the less desirable areas. Beyond visible feature lights a review of lighting levels and positions when done well gives patrons increased comfort. Comfort is a key impression when trying to attract customers to a venue on a repeat basis.
- **Signage and branding updates.** A venue refresh is an opportune time to review branding and signage. Again this does not need to be an expansive or expensive exercise. Refreshing a brand identity with a graphic design wiz can be outsourced competitively on websites like 'Upwork' or 'Airtasker'. New uniforms can be selected to be simple and cost effective whilst aligning with the new palette.

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Bringing these aspects together using styling objects, planting and a fresh energy is all apart of creating layered spaces that people readily relate to. The process and importance of the layered approach was recently discussed in more detail in an earlier [post](#).

The benefits of a venue refresh will be immediately evident, however consider the unseen benefits: the pleasure of a first time visitor discovering a venue that is fresh and vibrant; the pleasure of a long term customer knowing there is continued care and consideration for the familiar facilities they enjoy; and the heightened enjoyment of your dedicated staff working in an environment they can be proud of.