

## Win the Design War!

**Partner House founder Barry Shier may not be a household name, but the properties he helped create nearly everyone knows.**

Thursday, July 08, 2010

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We all know one of the hallmarks of Las Vegas is spectacular cutting-edge design. But little has been said of the design pioneers who set the stage for some of the world's most incredibly built resorts. We're not just talking about sheer size and form, but all the lessons learned that are translatable to hotels throughout the world.

Smart design isn't just about décor; it's about form and function. It's about how a property lives, breathes, creates flow and maximizes investor return while simultaneously creating a sense of guest wonderment. One of these design pioneers is Barry Shier, founder and managing principal of The Partner House. This asset management, turn-key acquisition and advisory service firm is just the latest challenge in Shier's 30-year career.



But he cut his teeth as part of the team that has created some of the most memorable resorts in the world during his 17-year tenure with Steve Wynn and Mirage Resorts. He was an integral part in creating properties such as Golden Nugget, Mirage, Treasure Island, Bellagio and the vastly underrated Biloxi, MS casino resort Beau Rivage.

We caught up with Shier to share with Hotel Interactive readers critical design elements that most people don't immediately consider.

### **How do you create a winning resort that pleases customers and the owners?**

Customers don't often know what they want. They want to have a good time and be comfortable, but when you get outside that, they don't know.

What is most important, though, is anticipating the importance in flexibility of design. That is really critical, because spaces have to have flexibility to them. You must allow the building to change as the dynamics of marketing change. So, spaces should accommodate many people but enable segmented spaces as well.

For example, a sports book can be 5,000 to 10,000 square feet but the space only has life until 7 or 8 p.m. So the question becomes how you can make this something else at night. You have to have the ability to take a facility to take space and convert that asset to something else.

## **So how do you create the right multifaceted design?**

Take the Bellagio lobby. It is an artistic presentation of space. Why spend all that money if it is not going to excite guests. The minute you get to Bellagio you look at that ceiling [of glass flowers]. And the adjacent conservatory creates a unique and dramatic garden experience.

They are both complimentary and functional spaces that also can be used for wedding receptions. They are not just beautiful spaces, they can also generate dollars. But good design cannot just be a whim, it has to make financial sense.

Look at walls in banquet spaces and consider the customization of environments so they become part of whoever is in them. As a guest you want to feel it's there for you and your enjoyment and ability to create memorable experiences in that space.

You have to program the design and all the items that go into the operational delivery of the design. The functionality of a restaurant is predicated on people that operate it. So letting design just happen doesn't work. Active design plays into the notion that guests want to be liberated and don't just want a good night's sleep in the privacy of their own room.

## **What about in the guest room?**

Bathrooms are a great place to start to create a design feature...lighting based on personality, for example. Dim the lights and have them be various colors such as blue or red. Look what's being done with customizable music now. These things build loyalty and create a wow factor.

Design needs to differentiate you and then it needs to come alive through the people put in it.

Everyplace you look [in the room], there should be an appealing thing to look at. At Mirage we look back and see the smaller size of the rooms. We would never do that again because you lose the ability to generate revenue if the room is too confining. When we built that hotel we took the average length of stay - just over one night - and tried to make it four.

You want to open up guests' minds, but it has to be more than visual stimulation. You have to consider the ability to sell the brand and control form. So you need to provide a place for people to be comfortable and they will spend more on product.

## **Can you give an example?**

When you look at dynamics of design at Starbucks, you see they are not big. But people are comfortable, and social interactions take place. You have to understand the nuances of how people want to be taken care of 24/7. They are moving in with you.

At hotels we feed them, give them drinks: that's a given. But do we create environments that enable us to feel like 'I go to this hotel because of X'? That means design must be part of entertainment because you have to do that to keep their attention. That creates expenditures and makes a property successful.

## Credit



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**Bio:** Glenn Haussman is Hotel Interactive's Editor In Chief, where he manages all editorial content for the hotel industry's leading online information resource. Here he creates unique and in-depth content that stimulates and educates the publication's ... [more](#)