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## A flooring "facelift": Simple changes increase marketability

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A realtor and I visited an office building in Framingham recently. As we walked through the front door and into the lobby, she mentioned her concern that prospective tenants seemed to have a bad first impression of the building. The interior finishes looked worn and there was no 'wow' factor, which she feels is an important part of developing a tenant's interest. She considered the idea that investing in the lobby and common areas of the property is just as critical as investing in marketing the property.

Are your common areas doing all they can to sell your space?

Imagine yourself walking up to your building for the first time. What would you see? A nicely-designed lobby, or would you notice the stain on the carpet in the entry way, the ripples in the halls, the frayed carpet seams, would it feel dark or out of date? It's not as complicated as you might think. With some well-planned and well-maintained flooring choices, you can add value, without even having to pull a permit.

Selecting the Right Materials

The commercial flooring universe of options is pretty complex, even though your local residential flooring company might have only a tiny section of their showroom devoted to it. That's why for commercial applications, it makes sense to work with a contractor who specializes in commercial work and has daily experience with specifying commercial materials. Each material has benefits and limitations; we believe finding the right match of the floor's intended purpose to the correct materials maximizes the useful life of the flooring for the money you're investing.

Dressing it up: Consider a Pattern

Consider selecting carpet with a dramatic pattern, or with contrasting borders. Larger patterns also hide stains and wear better than smaller or solid color carpets. If using tile, consider large format tile, which makes an area feel larger and more open, or having it installed on a 45-degree angle with a border around the edges.

Floor prep: What you don't see makes a big difference

A commonly underestimated element is proper floor preparation. You've probably seen bubbly carpet, pitted vinyl tile or cracked ceramic tile. Often, these problems are caused by improperly prepared floors. When done right, the surface of the substrate is filled in with appropriate materials to withstand the daily pounding of foot traffic.

Entry Mat systems slow the wear and tear

It is estimated that 85% of the soil tracked into a building comes from the soles of people's shoes, and most is distributed within the first 15 feet of carpet. As a result, floor covering maintenance can start outside the building with an entry system that will scrape dirt and debris off people's shoes before they grind it into your new floors.

A Clean Routine

Creating and sticking to a maintenance plan will also extend the life of your flooring. Vacuum cleaning alone can remove up to 80% of the dirt from carpet, and when combined with regular cleaning using manufacturer-approved methods (hot water extraction, dry foam, dry absorbent compound, etc.) and spot stain treatment, carpet can have a longer life cycle. Other materials such as VCT and ceramic tile need to be mopped regularly to avoid abrasion caused by dirt.

#### Maintenance

Trip hazards, broken seams and other maintenance should be repaired as soon as possible to avoid further damage to the materials. A good, full-service commercial floor covering contractor will be available to handle smaller service calls, not just large scale projects.

#### The Bottom Line

To get the most for your budget, be sure to select an experienced commercial flooring contractor who can help identify the best materials for the job, and make sure they're installed and maintained properly.

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