

These small upgrades could make your commercial property more desirable

By [Leon Breytenbach](#)

10 May 2019

The bottom line in owning commercial property is to make money, but this won't happen if you are experiencing frequent vacancies. There are a number of inexpensive quick-fixes which could make your commercial property more desirable to prospective tenants. You could schedule a complete makeover of your building at an enormous cost, but perhaps you should try less budget-wrecking changes first.



Be area-aware

Stand across the road and look critically at your property, then look at other properties in the immediate vicinity and ask yourself the following questions to help you decide what it will take to enhance the scene.

Are the surrounding buildings smart and upmarket, while yours is dull and dowdy? What makes them stand out? Are the pavements clean and neatly maintained? Are the fences, roofs, guttering etc. in good repair?

Smarten up

Freshly painted buildings or fences will effect an immediate improvement. The building colour scheme should appeal to the eye, so keep colours attractive yet muted; be inviting, yet professional. Give your property a name; an attractive name-board displayed at the entrance adds a touch of class.

Keep the indoor plants well-manicured. Outdoor patios or recreation areas will look inviting with the addition of a few architectural plants growing in planters or adjacent beds.

A designated area for waste and recycling containers should be readily accessible, clean, tidy, but preferably out of sight. Staircases, fire escapes, fire equipment, emergency signage and air-conditioning units should all be in good repair, dust-free and repainted if necessary.

Roofs, guttering and windows

Untidy, peeling or damaged fascia boards, broken roof tiles, and dangling gutters or downpipes make the place look unkempt. Prospective tenants will take one look and leave, presuming the interior is as neglected as the exterior. Ensure that the roof, gutters and downpipes are in good condition. A fresh coat of paint will make them look even better.

Windows should be clean, with no broken panes or damaged window frames. If trees or creepers are scraping against windows and walls or threatening to block out the light, they need to be trimmed back.

A welcoming reception area

Planters with bright flowers at the entrance will add a cheerful, welcoming note. If the building is vacant, make the reception area appear light and bright by switching on interior lights and opening blinds to allow in as much natural light as possible. Permanent items of furniture such as a reception desk should be clean, polished and tidy.

Clean, clean, clean

Although the prospective tenant may gain a great first impression when viewing the exterior of the property, it will serve no purpose if the interior doesn't have the same impact. As with the exterior, make sure the floors, walls and ceilings are spotlessly clean. Spider webs and dust-bunnies will deter the keenest client. If the walls are seriously marked and grubby, a fresh coat of paint in a neutral shade will solve the problem. Kitchens and toilets must be even cleaner, smelling fresh and hygienic; no blocked drains or grubby sinks. Mirrors should gleam, as should all chrome fixtures.

Lighting

Be sure all overhead lights are in working order with no dead globes. Switch on the lights, open the blinds, and if the weather allows, open windows too. Natural fresh air and daylight beat piped air and electric lighting any day. If you have a view that is less than attractive, open the blinds partially to allow light in but not enough to emphasise the view. However, if the view is spectacular, showcase it to its fullest potential; it could be a deal-clincher.

These suggestions may sound a little daunting, but they will be far less costly than a complete professional makeover of your commercial property. Not all these suggestions will necessarily apply to your building. Once the minor repairs and deep cleaning are completed, you will be able to see if any other measures are required to achieve the effect you want. It may surprise you to see how a little TLC will bring about a significant impact on your property, causing prospective tenants to be queuing at your door.

ABOUT LEON BREYTENBACH

Leon Breytenbach is national manager of the Rawson Property Group's commercial division.

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