Show Your True Colors

By Lyn Falk, Retailworks, Inc.

Color, when combined with lighting, is one of the most powerful elements of design. The colors you use in your business can have a profound effect on both your employees and customers/visitors. Color affects us physiologically and psychologically, so by carefully selecting the colors used in your selling environment, you can make a positive impact on customers' impressions of your brand and on the overall selling experience.

Every business should have a color palette. It generally starts with the logo and branded marketing materials. These colors are tweaked and sometimes expanded upon to create a color scheme for the interior of the space.

An interior should have a dominant color, one or two accent colors and a compatible neutral color. Color saturations (intensity or brightness of a color) should be kept similar in a color palette, as these pairings are more visually appealing, unless you're working with complementary colors, which should vary a bit to avoid creating an uncomfortable visual vibration. The wrong colors or the wrong pairings or intensities can turn off visitors and negatively affect employees' moods/performance.

Generally, light saturations — such as pastel colors — don't work well in a business setting, as they tend to be perceived as weak and ineffective. A color's appearance changes based on what other colors it's paired with, the material it's used on, the shape of the space it's used in and the surrounding lighting.

Read on to learn how different colors impact a space and the people in it:

Red
- The most powerful and attention-getting of all colors should be used carefully
- Communicates power, love and energy
- Gets people motivated and moving

Pink
- Even though a version of red, it surprisingly has the opposite effect, working to calm angry emotions
- Makes skin tones look great, so works well on walls around mirrors

Orange
- Energizes people and promotes socialization
- Conveys happiness and creativity
- Historically has been associated with discount price points

Green
- Universally liked
- Helps customers slow down and relax
- Conveys growth and optimism

Blue
- Universally liked
- Helps customers slow down and relax
- Conveys trust and loyalty

Purple
- A controversial color that people either like or dislike
- Works best when used as an accent color
- Conveys royalty and luxury

Note: Award-winning designer Lyn Falk of Retailworks, Inc. is a consumer behavior specialist and has 30-plus years of experience working with retailers in the areas of design, merchandising and display. Her clientele represents more than 35 different retail industries across the country. Visit retailworksinc.com or email lfalk@retailworksinc.com.