Colors, Colors Everywhere

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When combined with lighting, color is one of the most powerful elements of store design.

The colors you use in your showroom can have a profound effect on your customers and their physiological and emotional response to your space. When choosing color, consider your brand, your target market and the products you're selling. Which colors will best support your brand, appeal to your customer base and showcase your products in the best way?

Create a Color Palette

Every retailer should have a color palette. It generally comes from the company logo and branded marketing materials. These colors are then tweaked and sometimes expanded upon to create the color scheme for the store interior.

Every interior color palette should have a dominant color, an accent color and one or two neutral colors. (Often, the dominant color is the one used in the logo, or a slight variation of it.) Once the palette is determined, additional shades of the dominant and accent colors can be added.

Color Tips

Use the dominant color for walls that you want to draw attention to, such as a specialty department, behind the checkout counter, or the back of the store — wherever you want to make a statement. And then just watch; the feet will follow the eyes.

Use your accent color for trim, signage, fabrics and other accent pieces.

Use the neutral colors for the rest of the store. And by neutral, I don't mean just white. Creams, tans, beiges, grays and taupes are all great alternatives to white. Neutrals are often used in a "tone-on-tone" manner, which means a darker version of the neutral is paired with a lighter version to create a subtle difference between store sections or departments.

As a rule, warm colors such as reds, yellows and oranges tend to energize people. In fact, red is considered the most powerful of all colors, so use it judiciously as too much can be distracting. Cool tones such as blues and greens are universally liked. They are comforting colors and help consumers slow down and relax. Purple, on the other hand, is a controversial color; some folks love it, others hate it. Use it wisely.

Don't Forget Lighting

Be aware of how your lighting affects the colors you choose. The difference between warm lighting and cool lighting can be dramatic when it comes to the way a color reads in a space. Lamps with whiter light output (around 3,500 K to 4,200 K) and a color rendering index (CRI) of 85 or above will ensure your colors look their best.

What about trendy, fashionable colors? They can be used to highlight a display of trendy merchandise, but only for a limited amount of time, say three to six months, and they shouldn't clash with the store's general color palette.

As with any powerful tool, be careful how you use colors. By properly using the right color combinations you can strengthen your brand, keep your target market engaged, direct traffic, and more effectively showcase your product lines. ⦾

The clean, fresh color palette of this natural foods co-op supports the brand and the products it provides.

Use your dominant color to draw attention to select walls, and neutral tones throughout the rest of the store — but be sure to use red judiciously.

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