

insights

FOR A BETTER BUYING EXPERIENCE

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Color My Office Beautiful

As a manager, human resources professional or even company owner, one of the most challenging tasks is finding new, exciting ways to stimulate, motivate and inspire employees. Playing with the office environment, using color, texture and movement, is one of the easiest and least expensive changes that can be made.



With the influx of younger talent, the internet, and a generation of innovative thinking, the case of the antiquated office space is a thing of the past. Long gone are ultra conservative office spaces; the unadorned walls, stoic-like furniture and unoriginal spaces. Instead, current colors, bright accents, soothing tones and interesting textures add either subtle or captivating changes to an environment, acting as a stimulant for the workforce. Studies show that the use of color can either positively or negatively affect those in its midst and can even influence the way that we feel.

That's because color is moving energy that our body responds to, and different colors tend to impact us differently, according to Rebecca Ewing of Rebecca Ewing Color & Design. Therefore, the colors chosen and the way they're used in the office environment are important and should be carefully thought out for maximum effectiveness.

STIMULATING OR SOOTHING?

Consider the color red as an example. A clear, bright red works as a stimulus, increasing both respiration and heart rate. Red is a great color to use if the goal is to generate energy, stir things up, and get the brain engaged and active.

A softer version of the color, brick red, garnet or wine for instance, can produce a more calming effect and actually work as a stress reducer. If the idea is to slow things down, relax the environment and settle the flow of energy, then a more subtle tone might be the way to go.

So how does someone choose colors to enhance the workplace? Aside from taking into account the number of employees you have, the type of environment you want to design (soothing, energetic, quiet, etc.), and your budget, the first step is to really understand the certain properties and affects of color.

COLOR SELECTION IS KEY

Every morning, employees and managers stand in front of their closet deciding what to wear. Is the blue shirt appropriate for a presentation? Will the red tie make a statement? Is the pink dress too frivolous to be taken seriously?

While this is a common occurrence, it's not as common for manager and human resources professionals to put that much contemplation and forethought into how color can be used in an office setting. It makes sense to assume that color affects an office environment the same way it affects the people actually wearing a color. When considering color, whether it's to be worn or used in the workplace, think in terms of what message is to be conveyed to gain a favorable reaction.

NEUTRAL COLORS

A natural tendency when considering office design is to sway towards the conservative with neutral colors such as whites, beiges and grays. But using neutrals might not always be the best idea depending on the environment, the company, the employees, the client and how well the color is used.

While white is a good standard color that blends well with any color, the use of too much white can be considered dull and drab and less likely to stimulate creativity and excitement. The color brown, considered safe and nurturing, can also be boring for those that dislike it. And this response may adversely affect your employees.

Another office favorite is the use of black. Black is often seen as a color of power, aggression, and authority, but it also absorbs energy and can dramatically increase fatigue.



The best way to use neutrals is as a backdrop or foundation for other colors. A wide expanse of black or white with bright colors to add interest and dimension is a dramatic look that can be used in offices, lobbies or lounges. Grey is a perfect foil to a rich, deep color such as teal or wine. And beige can bring a lightness to other darker colors such as forest green or navy blue.

**KNOWING WHAT
COLOR TO USE AND
HOW TO USE IT IS
A GREAT BEGINNING**

COOL COLORS

Blue is known as a “cool” color on the color wheel and can have a calming affect when used properly. While considered a favorite by 35% of those asked, blue also can tend to slow down respiration, heart rate and brain activity, and might actually serve as a depressant, particularly for those workers who are frequently on the phone.

While also a cool color, green strikes a nice balance between warm and cool since it’s made of a mixture of blue and yellow. This means that varieties of green can give a feeling of calmness and steadiness, which is why it’s often used in medical settings. Green can be used as a more neutral color, signifying the coming together of two extremes.

WARM COLORS

If the objective is to reduce hostility and add a bit of playfulness in the work place, consider a color like orange, which decreases irritability and gives the impression of accessibility. Businesses wanting to convey a similar message might incorporate this vividly engaging color throughout their office design.

Red grabs attention and can be used to stimulate. However, since it’s also the color of danger or emergency, it should be used with discretion in certain situations. Splashes of red can be fun and exciting, while a big wash of red may cause agitation. And while yellow is good for retention and a cheerful color, it can be associated with warning or caution.

Violet or purple stimulates both the right and left brain and although it tends to stimulate creativity, it also quiets internal dialogue. If the employees in your company happen to be a group of technical computer consultants, purple might be the perfect color of choice to match their vocation and personalities.

UNDERSTAND YOUR PURPOSE

When planning the office color scheme, the catalog of options is as diverse as the employees and industries they represent. Before generating a purchase order for the multicolored throw rug, the psychedelic desk chairs, or splattering the walls with bursts of energy-generating dyes, make sure that you understand your objective.

Like any good office design, there must be a purpose, a thoughtfully crafted reason and logic for making decisions. When considering the use of color, there is one important question to ask: How do you want people to behave and respond in this room?

Every office environment is different and likewise the use of its space represents different functions and activities. So the most appropriate color will vary depending on the location and use of the space. Red for example is a good color to use in public places where there might be more playful activity. By contrast, an office space that conducts testing might incorporate blues, which provides a calm state of mind and gives the perception of more time.

A law firm representing a conservative clientele, and in need of space that symbolizes assurance and professionalism, might consider a neutral color like gray, which tends to represent balance and formality, while offsetting with a brighter, warmer color that offers a feeling of openness and appeal. A healthcare establishment wanting to depict an ambience of comfort should opt for a cooler, calmer color such as turquoise or green, which promotes health and well-being.

Once the purpose of the space is determined, look around the office, consider the staff and the clients, and then begin to plan your color palette.

INCORPORATING COLOR

Knowing what color to use and how to use it is a great beginning. Implementing it into the current or new environment is the next step. For small workspaces needing

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to appear larger, try using lighter or cooler colors to give the appearance of a more open space. When working within the confines of a small budget, splurge on accessories, like wall hangings, mirrors and other wall décor that can easily bring to life dull or sparse walls.

Likewise, an inexpensive can of paint does wonders for brightening up wall space and makes a significant difference in the environment. For a more sophisticated look, try oriental or throw rugs along with floor emblems; a marbled logo is an innovative way to add sophistication and creative design to the office environment. To make subtle differences with colorful highlights, try fusing original furnishings into a stabilized environment.

Colorful chairs and lounges can add bursts of refreshing changes that can modify a setting in as little as a day. Partitioned or cubicle space can be ordered in an array of colors, fabrics, laminates and paint finishes. These small changes can give the office environment an incredible lift.

Want to create a relaxing, soothing atmosphere? Floor lamps with colored lampshades and matching bulbs can be used to set any number of moods ranging from reflexive to contemplative for either worker or client. And don't forget that even standard office equipment like filing cabinets, desks, credenzas and computers are more visually engaging when they are done in a color that adds a spark to the office environment.

MORE THAN VISUAL APPEAL

For the business that understands its use, color can offer much more than visual appeal. The use of color, beyond that of decoration, is a powerful everyday tool that can be used to stimulate, motivate and inspire employees to think more creatively and act more productively. When employed effectively, color can be used as an influencer to energize environments and generate compelling results. Companies wanting to impact their overall environment can readily harness the power of color to positively impact their facility and everybody within it.



SOURCES:

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