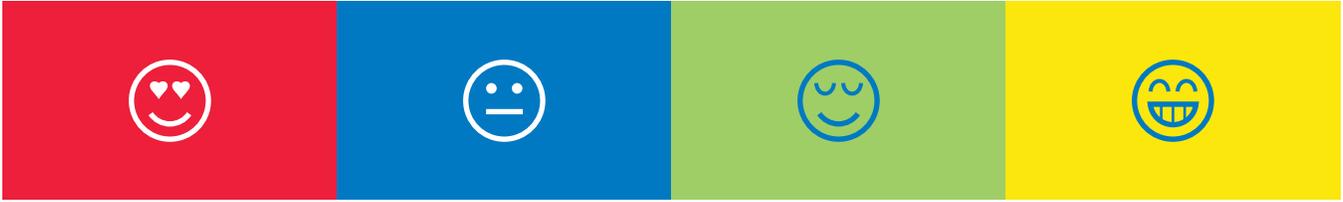# How Colors Affect You and Your Company

by David Gilman

Color can have a surprisingly profound impact on your business and your target audience because color sends an instant message. Without a single word, color can express an emotion and evoke a response. In many ways, color is more important than any other factor in making a brand memorable.

Successful companies use this to their advantage. Think of Coke, IBM, and Kodak, and your brain delivers images of red, blue, and yellow. What's more, this phenomenon happens automatically, without any conscious effort on your part.

Because color triggers an instant emotional response, it has a powerful impact on your target audience. For one thing, studies show that color boosts brand recognition by up to 80 percent. This is not surprising when you consider how hard it would be to differentiate companies if they all appeared in black and white.

How color is used has an enormous impact on the message you send your target audience. Since color can represent attributes like assertive, dynamic, or bold, you need to consider exactly which attributes define your company and appeal to your audience.

Colors have meaning. There is a hidden language, a subliminal meaning, behind each and every color.

Warm colors like red, orange, and yellow convey comfort and cheer, which tends to stimulate the appetite. That's why they are often chosen by companies like McDonalds to convey the promise of food and fun, while H&R Block uses green, a color that connotes money and financial value.

Following is a quick trip through the spectrum to identify what certain colors represent.

Blue, the color of the sea and sky, portrays permanence and solid dependability, so it's a natural for IBM. The shade of blue sported by Tiffany's, by the way, has come to mean expensive as well as enduring.

Yellow, the color of sunshine, is associated with joy, happiness, and energy. Meanwhile, redis an emotionally charged color. It has been shown to impact human metabolism, increases respiration rate, and raises blood pressure. It's the color of fire and blood, associated with intensity, strength, and power.

Green is the color of nature. It symbolizes growth, harmony, freshness, and vitality. It is the most restful color for the human eye, and it can actually improve vision. Green suggests stability, endurance, and the power to heal.

Smart companies choose a single dominant color … one that best reflects the firm's vision and personality … and they use it everywhere. If you already have a corporate color, or if you are in the process of choosing one, you might start by considering these questions:

- Is the color distinctive?
- Is it differentiated from your competitors?
- Is it likely to have a positive impact on your target audience?
- Will the color be recognized easily and immediately?

When your chosen color is used consistently across everything from logos and marketing materials to packaging, signage, and websites, it will open doors, introduce your company, and create an indelible, memorable impression.

David Gilman is the founder and President of Cognito. He is dedicated to helping companies achieve the utmost recognition through eye-opening visual communications. In his 25 years in graphic design he has been published worldwide in numerous publications on brand identity and logo design. For more information, please visit www.cognitocreative.com.