

One Typically Overlooked Reason You Might Not be Winning More Business.

Paying attention to the colors you wear, and the colors others wear can change the way you are perceived and how you should sell.

Hello Sales and Business Hero,

What's your customer's favorite color? What's yours? By the end of this article you will be paying closer attention and gain insight into how your wardrobe influences your ability to quickly close more business.

A project manager I worked with started his first meeting with a classic icebreaker. At this first meeting he asked everyone to write down their favorite color and animal on piece of paper. We were going to pull the papers out of a hat and guess who wrote what.

Innocent. Right?

It was really a very crafty device the project manager uses to learn the personality, working style and, to a degree, expectations of the team. And he took very careful notes about who wrote what.

You'll understand why as we talk more about colors for minute. You may even change what you planned to wear to your next meeting, or work tomorrow.

Manufacturing and Managing Expectations with Color

Black is the color of authority and power. If black is your favorite color you might be telling the world you see things as "black or white", "right or wrong", "your way or no way".

White symbolizes innocence and purity reflecting light. It is light, neutral, and goes with everything. The right amount of white says you're open to suggestion. Too much... well, would you ask someone wearing a white suit to help you change a flat tire or lend a hand digging a hole?

Red is the most emotional color. It makes your heart beat and breathing faster. It is the color of passion. Red clothing gets noticed. It is an extreme color and is a risk to wear in presentations, negotiations or confrontations unless what you're wearing is the only thing you want them to remember- accept as an accent.

Pastel Pink has a tranquilizing effect. Too much pink and your audience could lose energy and focus. They might just forget you.

Hot Pink... you might as well wear red.

Blue is one of the most popular colors. It causes the opposite reaction as red. Blue is peaceful and tranquil like the sky on a clear day, or a calm ocean. Experts advise wearing blue to job interviews symbolizing loyalty.

Green symbolizes nature. It is a calming, refreshing color. Dark green is masculine, conservative, and implies wealth. Be careful wearing green. The way the color reflects off your face can make you look ill.

Bright **yellow** is an attention getter. Even though it's considered an optimistic color, studies show that people lose their tempers more often in yellow rooms. Tough for the eye to take in, yellow enhances concentration- think highlighter.

Purple says luxury, wealth, and sophistication. But, it can appear artificial, too. Wear too much purple and your prospect might be thinking about 'how much this is going to cost me' instead of the value you are delivering. It is best used as an accent.

Brown is the color of earth, solid and reliable. Light brown says you are genuine and dark brown conveys a strong and dependable feeling to the observer.

Charcoal Grey is serious, solid and dependable. It bridges the gap between black and blue implying authority, power while not being overpowering. Wear a white shirt to be taken more seriously, a light blue shirt to enhance that sense of loyalty.

What color has to do with selling.

You might be thinking this is a load of bunk right now. I understand you are probably skeptical. I felt the same way at first.

Then I started thinking about it. You've probably heard the same stories I did about Einstein only having black suits and white shirts in his closet. If it was good enough for a smart guy like Einstein, why shouldn't it be good enough for me?

Well, for one thing... I'm not Einstein.

I don't have any particular scientific, mathematical theory in my back pocket. And didn't Einstein work in a post office for a while? Struggling to pay the rent, while he figured out how to get people in the scientific community to hear him out?

And for another, Einstein wasn't in sales and marketing.

So, I decided to run a test. Admittedly, it was a bit less than scientific. It's not like I have a panel of guys running around in lab coats checking pupil dilation, heart rate, blood pressure or recording reactions and responses to everything I say.

And I didn't wear a tie, opting for the open collar, business casual feel and therefore also limiting the variants that could influence the test.

Still, the results were interesting--

Using a control group of people I meet with regularly once a week for several hours, I modified my dress slightly:

1. Black suit, black belt, black shoes and white shirt: People were a little distanced.
2. Black suit, black belt, black shoes and light blue shirt: People were less distant.
3. Navy Blue suit, black belt, black shoes and white shirt: People were pleasant but formal.
4. Navy Blue suit, brown belt, brown shoes and blue striped, button down collar shirt: People were less formal and seemed friendly and talkative.

Clearly, the black suit was imposing. It's not something you should wear to a meeting- unless it was taking place in the back room and you were stepping out of a formal affair. Or want to clearly communicate you speak with absolute authority, not to be questioned.

I think we all knew the navy suit would get the best results. However, the really interesting observation was that wearing the brown belt and brown shoes with the navy blue suit lightens up people's attitudes. Adding brown subconsciously adds genuineness and dependability to the calm loyalty of the blue.

I've experienced the same results wearing a charcoal grey suit, in place of the navy blue.

This is going to sound chauvinistic.

Ladies, be careful. Red, Hot Pink, Purple, Bright Yellow- In pant suit or dress these primary type colors are distractions from your skill and message. People are looking at you and not listening to what you are saying.

And seriously, please rethink the whole red shoe thing for business attire if you want to be taken seriously in or out of the office.

Men, wearing reds, purples, yellows, and even hot pinks are fine as accents like a tie or pocket kerchief. They build on the foundation of the clothes you wear. Look at Donald Trump or Larry Kudlow from CNBC.

However, please guys-- stick to white, light blue or thin blue-striped shirts unless you work for Tony Soprano.

Another corporate attire no-no is the whole Regis Philbin color tie on color shirt thing- it isn't making anyone take you seriously. Really.

Test your colors

There is a reason successful people dress a certain way. And if you want to be successful, you want to take a serious look at yourself in the mirror and remember that other people, people you want to do business with you, will be looking at you all day.

Advertisers and internet marketers have known this for years. There is a reason a successful company brand name and logo is the shape, font and color that it is. And generally it took a lot of creativity, time and testing to get it that way.

Seem silly?

What colors do your customers wear?
What does it tell you about their mood or disposition.

How about your management or the president of your company?

Spend five minutes more thinking about who you are meeting with and then choose what you're wearing today.

That is what effective marketing and selling is about. Sometimes it's the small things that give you the edge. Remember when you are selling a product, you are still marketing yourself. You want people to like, believe and trust you.

Avoid doing something that will lead the customer down the path away from making the decision you are looking for and see if your results improve as I'm sure they will.

You can read more about psychological impact of colors at Infoplease.com here:
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/colors1.html>

Be The Hero,
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<p>Mark Daniels is a B2B and B2C Business Marketing and Sales Consultant, Author and Speaker specializing in creating calls-to-action that generate leads, shorten sales cycle times, increase top line sales and bottom line margins. You can find other articles by Mark at www.mysaleshero.net Reach Mark at Mark@mysaleshero.net</p>
