Color basics

James Hackworth
http://www.hackworthdesign.com/

Color Psychology

The use of color in graphic design is a powerful tool for eliciting an emotional response from the viewer. When used correctly color has the ability to influence how the audience perceives a product, service or company. Careful consideration must be used to determine the correct use of color.

Dark blue is a great color for corporate business; it is no mistake that many corporate logos and business suits are this color. It is symbolic of trust and reliability. Blue is a poor color for the food industry, mainly because it isn't a common food color.

The one exception would be for a food product aimed at young children who are excited by novelty.

 Take a look at the major fast food restaurants and you will mainly find warmer colors such as yellow and orange in their logos and interior decorating. These colors have been found to elicit a hunger response and are associated with food, so it makes sense for these companies to use them.

Color Models

In the graphic design profession there are three main color models used for design depending on the application:
1
CMYK
2
RGB
3
Pantone

CMYK

CMYK stands for cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. It is commonly referred to as

four-color process and is the model used for printed material. These four colors combined and layered on paper allow the creation in theory of all colors. Any printed item can use all or some of these colors and the price of the printing is greatly influenced by how many colors are used in the creation of the design. A one-color print will be far less expensive than one using all four colors.

RGB

RGB stands for Red, Green, and Blue. This is the color model used for what you see on your computer monitor or television. Since the color used for web design isn't meant to be printed there are no cost limitations on the use of color for the web.

At one time color use was limited to what are called web safe colors for the design of web sites. These colors were used because of the limitations of the then current technology. Today we don't have these limitations and can use the full range of colors available. The rules of color psychology still apply, and good design will use the best colors to elicit the desired response.

Pantone

Pantone colors are used in the printing process when you want an exact color match. Pantone color is used in the design of logos and corporate identity. If you specify pantone color for a print job, the color will be exactly as you want it from one printed piece to the next. So if you are looking for consistency in your color it is best to specify the use of Pantone color.

If you have a brochure printed for your company, you would probably have this done using the CMYK model, but to insure the company logo looks exactly as it should you would have the logo printed using a Pantone color, this is commonly referred to as a spot color. The use of spot colors will increase the cost of printing, but is necessary if you want a consistent look throughout all of your printed material.

If you are using a printing service, and specifying the use of a Pantone color, then the color should be consistent from one print job to the next. If the color isn't consistent then you need to find another printer to do your work for you.

One limitation of Pantone colors or any ink is the type of paper that your design is printed on. A Pantone color on glossy or coated paper will not look the same on an

uncoated or plain paper. So your color will be very consistent between print jobs, but is influenced by your paper choices. Your printer should be able to make adjustments to compensate within reason, but don't expect the same quality on newsprint that you get on your business cards. A good printer can make adjustments so that your printed material looks the best, but they are also limited by what you are willing to spend on materials.