Why Color Matters

Larry Van Wave, Learning & Development Sr. eLearning Developer

I recently watched an impactful video of a paint company, Valspar, teaming up with EnChroma in a documentary called, "Color for the Colorblind". In this particular video, Enchroma documented people trying on a pair of their glasses, which helped them experience color for the very first time. A statement in the video from Robert Spruijt, a perceptual psychologist, really resonated with me. He said, "In the end, the experience of color is so private, that you don't really know how to explain that." I believe many of us would agree that experiencing color can almost be unexplainable, and we hardly think of how powerful it is.

"Color can function as a powerful information channel."

- **Larry Van Wave**

Researchers have been studying the fundamental importance of color for years, and the data clearly sheds light on just how powerful a tool color can be. In fact, the Seoul International Color Expo found that, when deciding on which product to purchase, 93% of respondents report they rely on visual factors, such as color. More specifically, 85% said that, when considering all factors, *color* was the most important one - leading them to purchase one product over the other. Considering that a majority of purchasing decisions are made in-store, catching the shopper's eye with the use of color is the most valuable weapon. For those working in our retail stores, try using the power of color the next time you are setting up your merchandise displays; you can actually draw the customer to a certain area just by placing highly visible colors in the right area.

Not only does color play a large role in selling merchandise, it can also influence the way we feel in specific surroundings. Take a moment to imagine the inside of our retail stores, career centers, and web-based platforms. On our printed materials, logo, signage, and other graphics, you will see that blue is the main color being used. So what would be some of the reasons that blue is used as our company primary color? Through research on color and retail store environments, Joseph Bellizzi and colleagues found that customers rated cool color store environments as more attractive and pleasant, rather than warm color store environments. In addition, using blue conveys the feelings of trust, reassurance, constancy, faithfulness, professionalism, and reliability. Blue is not the only color that we use, but our branding color pallet has been strategically selected to reflect the look and feel of our culture.

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We've established that color is pretty extraordinary, influencing our attention and feelings, but color can also go as far as impacting our memory. Color can function as a powerful information channel, playing a huge role in improving memory performance! In 1976, Frank Farley and Alfred Grant found that colored learning materials resulted in better attention and memory performance. Here at GCNA, when developing team members' training materials, we leverage this information to use colors to help learners recall information and increase focused attention. Another great example of this being put to use at our organization is right in our production rooms! Team members use the colors pink, yellow, and blue to recognize and recall where items go a lot easier. (Rather than just relying on black and white labels and markings.)

While some of these examples argue for colors' role in branding, marketing, and recognition, the outcomes can be applied to other everyday matters too. They show, after all, how personal and fundamental color really is. Color may remain unexplainable, in itself, but the power of its influence has been proven important – in more ways than one.

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