

# harder working spaces



## The Impact of Color

### The Personality of Color

#### red

focus  
energy  
stimulation  
organization

#### blue

intelligence  
creative thinking  
logic  
calm  
harmony

#### green

nature  
relaxation  
calmness  
cooperation  
understanding

Pink isn't a color usually associated with football. But during the late 1970s, the head coach at the University of Iowa had a startling idea. He painted the visitor's locker room pink because he believed it had a calming affect and would cause players to become passive. Was it a just a stunt to get inside the heads of opposing players? Apparently not.

The idea that colors can elicit specific behaviors or emotions was investigated in the 1960s by Alexander Schauss at the American Institute for Biosocial Research in Tacoma, Washington. In one well-known study, Schauss examined the physiological responses to the color pink. To test his theories, he convinced the U.S. Navy to paint a number of cells in their Seattle correctional facility a particular shade of pink. Schauss demonstrated that in a pink environment, heart rates slowed, muscles relaxed and aggressive behavior diminished. Pink isn't the only color with subtle powers of persuasion.

### Setting the Mood

The ability of color to impact mood and behavior has been the subject of countless studies. But what do the findings mean for those involved in creating workplace environments? Could color have an impact on reasoning, creativity or other qualities prized in the business world? Which colors encourage engagement and productivity? Alternatively, which colors have the power to discourage people from becoming comfortable and engaged? They're important questions for anyone concerned with organizational performance.

< continued **The Impact of Color**



### The Color of Creativity

While color is highly subjective, there are some general truths about the impact of specific colors based on years of study.

Bright, warm colors stimulate focus and attention. In a 2007 study conducted at the University of British Columbia (UBC), researchers measured the effects of red versus blue environmental stimuli on the intellectual performance of hundreds of participants. Their conclusion: red visual cues improved detail oriented tasks "such as memory retrieval and proofreading."

Cool colors, and especially blue, are thought to encourage productivity and creative thinking. They're calming colors that support concentration and clear thinking. In the same UBC study, performance measures concluded that blue visual cues stimulated output during creative assignments such as brainstorming and collaboration.

Green is a calming color that conjures images of nature and a relaxed mood. Yellow and orange provoke alertness, attention and clear thinking. They're optimistic and energizing colors. White is light, neutral and creates a feeling of spaciousness or cleanliness. Pink, as we've seen, produces a sense of calm and reduces aggression. Certain behavioral characteristics are associated with different hues across the entire color spectrum.

### Color That Works

The impact of color on behavior has undeniable significance in the workplace. Figuring out which colors are most suitable depend on many factors and can vary widely for corporate, educational and healthcare environments. An organization's brand, culture, workforce, how a space is used and other characteristics all play a part. At NBS Commercial Interiors, we help large and small organizations optimize their space with a thoughtful integration of architecture, furnishings and technology. Developing the right palette of colors and materials is an essential part of the process. Aesthetics are important in selecting colors, but they should also support the overall goals of an enterprise. It's how we approach the design of every work environment.

Find out more about using color to enhance your workspace by calling your NBS representative or visiting yourNBS.com.

**yellow**

emotional  
confident  
alert  
optimistic  
friendly

**orange**

warm  
upbeat  
self-confident

**white**

sophisticated  
sterile  
efficient

**pink**

calming  
nurturing  
tranquil