

SOMETIMES ALL YOU NEED IS A FRESH COAT OF PAINT/ THE POWER OF PAINT

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When deciding to build or remodel an office space, most people consider how the design will affect workflow and productivity. Companies spend thousands of dollars each year working with designers to create modern and efficient workspaces for their employees. However, there is one often overlooked consideration that has an impact on employee mood and

productivity: the color of the walls.

Having done freelance marketing work for some years for a painting contractor, I learned that paint does much more than just protect, update, and beautify surfaces. Paint color choices affect mood and behavior. Although color is often thought to be subjective, many research studies done by designers and psychologists suggest particular colors evoke similar responses in most

people and have an effect on mood and behavior.

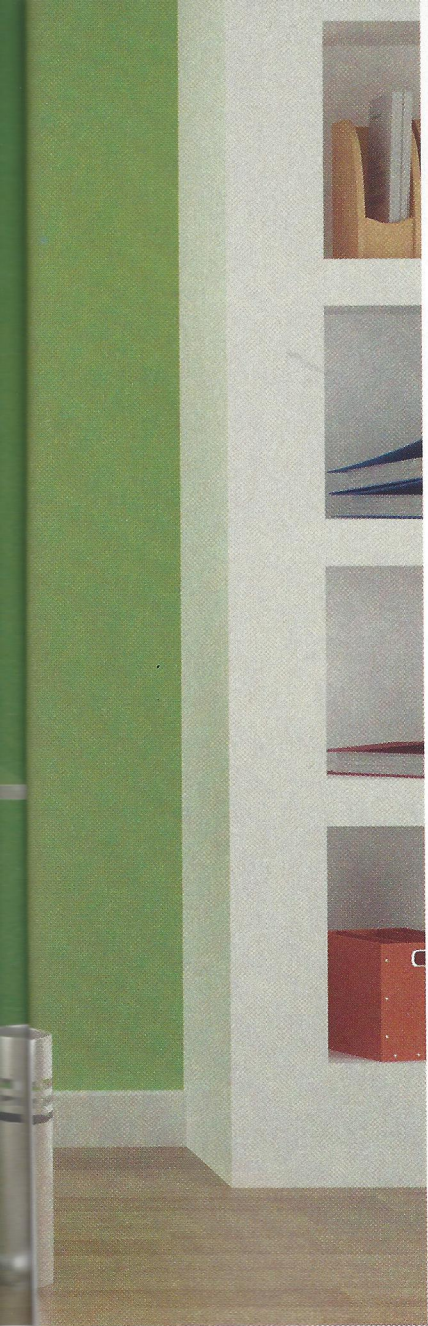
A widely cited study by the University of Texas in 2014 suggests color affects mood and profoundly impacts productivity. Both short- and long-term studies had similar findings. This research study examined the three top color choices: white (neutrals), red (warm colors), and blue/green (cool colors). Here is a recap of some significant findings with some great tips to consid-

er before picking up that paintbrush.

Don't paint walls white, gray, or beige, which is the color of most office buildings. These colors are drab and tend to depress mood. The University of Texas study finds women had an enormous drop in productivity when surrounded by these colors.

For men, productivity plummeted with orange or purple surroundings.

Blue is the most popular color choice for men and



women. It was shown to calm the senses and increase attention. Also, since blue appeals to most people, it is a good color choice for large common areas.

Green is another color with a broad appeal to both men and women. Green is perceived as fresh and vibrant, probably because of its close association with nature. This color is a good color for employees who need to work as a team, as it may promote a harmonious balance among work-

ers to keep the peace while inspiring creativity.

Need a jolt of energy, some passion, and excitement? Use red in areas where high concentration, creativity, and exciting collaboration take place, such as in conference rooms and large assembly areas.

Yellow is associated with happiness and can boost employee self-esteem. Using yellow or accents of yellow may help in offices where employee moral or boredom is a problem.

Use black sparingly as it has a darkening effect and can be depressing. If you love neutral colors, stay away from white as it is too institutional. As stated from the previous study, beige, brown, and gray can depress mood. If you love these colors, use them to complement a well-liked color, such as blue or green.

Pastel tones of any color may benefit a darker office environment that does not have natural light coming in. Pastel colors, like blue and green, tend to have a calming effect that can help with concentration and focus. Too bright of colors

can cause eyestrain and feelings of anxiety. Consider the saturation of colors (purity), the degree of lightness, and the overall palette of colors in the room—including the carpet and furniture—before painting.

While painting patterns and designs are trendy, it can have an adverse effect on productivity and mood. Patterns tend to promote overexcitement and excess energy. Avoid stripes and patterns in areas where high concentration is needed.

I spoke with a former business associate, Tim Grubbs of Quality Assurance Painting, Inc. in Leesburg, and he shared several important points to consider when choosing a color for an office environment.

- Don't just choose a favorite color, or the trending "color of the year." Instead, consider the type of business and the environment needed for employees and customers.

- When choosing a color for an office, keep in mind

that specific color choices are known to soothe the nerves, foster collaboration, increase the focus of attention, stimulate creativity, and energize the environment. Do your homework before looking through a paint color fan.

- Paint color should enhance an environment, not overpower it.

- The beauty of paint is it can quickly make an impact at a much lower cost than most other types of improvements.

- Create the business environment you want by taking the time to consider paint choices for your office walls. Choose colors that work best with your business type and the needs of your employees.

You will be delighted by the increase in productivity, which just might positively affect your bottom line.

Source: Kwallek, N., Soon, K. and Lewis, C. M. (2007), Work week productivity, visual complexity, and individual environmental sensitivity in three offices of different color interiors. *Color Res. Appl.*, 32: 130–143. doi: 10.1002/col.20298

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