



The Raphael Report

**Observations on marketing,
advertising, sales and
promotions
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What's the Color of Your Business?

My insurance salesman used orange envelopes. When the mail arrived with the stack of white envelopes and an orange one stood out in the pile, I knew I received something from my insurance agent. He wore an orange handkerchief in his suit jacket and orange socks. He always had a pocket full of orange candies.

I knew who he was. Every time. His color told me.

What color is your business?

Is there a specific color which, when seen, brings the name of your business or product to mind? There should be. It's all part of the identification process that makes you stand out and apart from the competition.

Our store's colors were beige and brown. So were our boxes, bags, stationery, even the clothes we wore. (Yes, it's also the color of Saks Fifth Avenue's bags, boxes etc and if you got us mixed up with them...well, that's OK.)

One of the ads in my "Best Advertisement" file is a double-page spread. One page was all the copy, the other page a solid yellow. The headline said, "Even the color of the label separates Cutty Sark from all the rest."

You buy a bottle of Scotch. The salesman says, "What brand?" Your eyes run over the shelf selections and you answer, "The one with the yellow label. I think I read somewhere it's better."

Not to be outdone, Johnny Walker Red offered its own double page spread in Life magazine. You saw a huge picture of leaves and this one line of copy: "In the fall, even the leaves turn to red."

What's that have to do with whiskey? Is the taste better? The quality finer? The price lower? No. Just the color of the label.

Or, if you prefer, you might choose Black and White with the color of the two Scotty puppies on the label.

Will this "color identification" work for you? Worth a try. Here's how to start: Choose a color with meaning or significance. Red can mean embarrassment (blush), a country (China), evasion (herring), delay (tape), or stop (light).

White can mean Broadway (Great White Way), purity or the hats the good guys wear in Western movies.

Blue can mean a nursery rhyme (Little Boy), a painting (boy), a killer (beard) or sadness.

Green can be envy, inexperience, a sign to go or the pasture to lie down in.

Yellow is a taxi, a coward, a sign of caution or a ribbon tied around an old oak tree.

Gold is silence, not all that glitters, the fleece sought by Jason or the rule to guide your life. Or our local financial expert's description who says the Golden Rule for bankers is, "Those that have the gold, rule." Some colors become chameleons, from the suspicious horse (the one of a

different color) the panther that was a black civil rightist in the 1960s, a pink detective in the 1970s and a gray senior citizen in the 1980s.

You receive advertisements in the mail for White Sales (sometimes towels and sheets, sometimes refrigerators or washing machines).

There's a bank in Paris that advertises they are "the one with the yellow awning." Not higher interest paid on saving accounts. Not faster service. Not money to loan. Just the color of the awning.

Colors can also be one word descriptions: rust (wears out); lemon (bad wares); raspberry (where you are criticized).

Colors convey emotions and degrees of warmth. Blues are cool. Brown and olive are quiet, subdued, laid back. Red is exciting and so is purple which is also prose and sometimes cows. Poet Gelett Burgess once wrote:

I never saw a purple cow
I never hope to see one
But I can tell you, anyhow
I'd rather see than be one.

Colors have genders. Or no gender. They can be masculine (black, brown, olive, beige, rust, gray, blue), feminine (pink, white, purple) or neuter (green, orange, gold, royal).

And sometimes you might be a kaleidoscope of many colors like Joseph's coat.

What all this means: If colors can set off emotional reactions (they can), why not adapt and adopt the consumer's positive reaction to your business (you should)?

When you associate your business with a color, you've taken a giant step toward bringing your potential customer to read what you write and buy what you sell.

Any doubts you may have as to the success of this philosophy will disappear after the next rainfall. Simply look into the sky and see the rainbow (which is all colors) and you will remember what awaits you at the end.