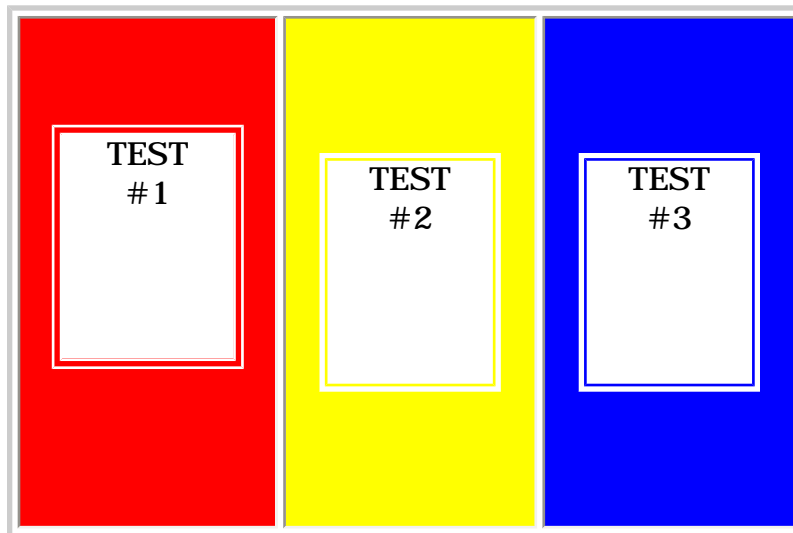


How To Increase Your Online Sales In 10 **Colorful** Ways!

The other day, a friend was telling me about an experiment he did. He wondered if changing color on his web site would make any difference in sales. He kept black text on a white background and tested a variety of colors around it. In other words, his text was in a "box" and he changed the colors surrounding it, such as in the example below:



I should add that he did not change any other element; he didn't change the text, headline, bolding, illustrations, or any other variable. And through this rigorous, careful testing, he proved that for his target market there is one particular color that produces **significantly higher sales** than the others.

While my friend has made me promise (for obvious reasons) not to reveal his site or exact results, his findings are important because they prove that the color or colors you choose for your web site create an emotional response in visitors that can translate into higher online sales for your business. In fact, this single design element can make...

The difference between having a highly profitable business or meager, disappointing sales.

Color is such an important part of our life experience, yet as web site owners, I doubt if most of us give the choice of colors on our sites anywhere near the attention it warrants. So to help you start using color to your advantage, here are 10 tips that will allow you to:

- Set the mood for your web site -- by using color to match your message.
- Help guide visitors through your site -- by using color to create a sense of flow and

continuity.

- **Keep visitors on your site longer** -- by using the colors that have the greatest appeal to your market.
- Build credibility in your company and offer -- by using less color, not more.
- **Close more sales!** -- by using color to encourage visitors to take the desired action.

The faster you implement the following 10 tips, the sooner you will gain the many benefits that the correct use of color will give you. Best of all, changing color is easy and won't cost you a penny -- and the results just might **put a lot more dollars in your wallet.**

Tip #1: Choose colors that enhance the theme of your site.

If you were designing a web site for your favorite sports team, then your color choice would be obvious; you would use the team colors because those are the ones fans would immediately recognize from the team uniform and that would call up memories of good times and excitement. Similarly, there are some colors that are just "naturally" associated with familiar products and services such as:

- Environmentally-safe products -- green
- Coffee products -- brown
- Swimming pools -- blue
- Restaurants -- white (since it reminds people of cleanliness)

And just as you would never use the colors of an archrival when choosing colors for your team's site, there are some colors that should never be used with particular products or markets because of the associations they create.

For example, people do not like blue or black with food items, and so it would be a mistake for a restaurant to serve food on a black plate. If that same restaurant was an "all you can eat" buffet, then they definitely would not want to serve food on red plates since red is a color that encourages diners to stay and eat more. On the other hand, if you want to lose weight, start eating off a blue plate since you will be inclined to eat less; if you need to gain weight, however, then eating your meals from red plates is a good idea.

To select the best colors for your site, consider which colors immediately come to mind when you think of your product or service. If you sell wedding dresses or rent out tuxedos then the right colors are obvious, but what about selling products like health supplements or auto parts, where no colors immediately spring to mind?

If you are stumped, wondering which colors go best with your product or service, a good way to start is by looking carefully at magazine advertising in your industry and noticing which colors are used repeatedly by the biggest players. Notice the ads that never change month after month. You can bet those ads are working, and there's your first clue as to which **colors you should look at for your web site.**

Your next consideration is your target market. Certain colors have proven to have wide appeal among niche groups such as:

- Women -- who tend to prefer bluish reds.
- Men -- who tend to prefer yellowish reds.
- Children -- who always enjoy bright colors like yellow.
- Truck buyers -- who often choose black or brown for their vehicle purchases since these colors show strength and durability.
- Sports car enthusiasts -- who often choose red, a color of passion, excitement, and danger.
- Affluent purchasers -- who respond to forest green and burgundy since these colors send a message of quality and high price.

Green has wide appeal and is a good color to use in combination with other colors. Light green, silver, and gray convey a more mainstream product or service, whereas gold says "prestige" and "expensive." These are the colors that have proven to be most effective for expressing a particular range of price and quality. You should still conduct your own testing, of course, but consider the colors that are typically associated with your product and check out advertising in your industry to give yourself a good starting point.

Tip #2: Design your web site in black and white and see if your copy and structure alone are strong enough to convey your message.

Always remember that your site should be able to communicate your message and persuade your visitors to take action without relying on color and illustrations. Your copy should be able to communicate on its own and your overall design should convey "quality," "excitement," "confidence," "stability," "fun," "caring," or whatever feeling corresponds with the theme and purpose of your web site.

Also remember that **white space is equally important as color**. If you clutter your site with banners, illustrations, photos, or graphics, then this "image overload" could distract your visitors from seeing and understanding what you are trying to say. In other words, if your web site graphics are "shouting" at visitors like midway hawkers at a state fair, then that "noise" will interfere with the message.

SPECIAL NOTE: To apply this tip if you already have a web site, print each page of your site in black and white and then objectively consider your sales copy and design. Be ruthless and eliminate anything on your site that does not support your message.

Tip #3: Once you are happy with the copy and design, add one color at a time.

In designing a business web site, a good rule of thumb is **less color is more**. Start with just one or two colors (no more than four) on a white background to dramatize your message. See the different visual effects you can create by using just one color in your sub-headlines, borders, highlighted keyword phrases, and navigation buttons.

The way your web site's background color and texture contrast with your copy are critical. Some backgrounds are distracting to the point of overpowering the message. Other backgrounds are so similar to the text color that the copy can barely be read or so colorful that they strain readers' eyes.

SPECIAL NOTE: For readability of your text, it is best to go with black text on a white background because the high contrast is easiest for the human eye to see on a computer screen. Sometimes you might want to reverse it with white text on a dark background to create a dramatic effect. Just remember that if you do this, people will not be able to print out the page that they are on. This is due to the fact that browsers are set to print on a white background by default.

For example, if I have a black page with white text, the browser is set by default to print the page's text on a white piece of paper. If the text is white, obviously it will not show up. Another consideration to take is to limit the amount of text to a headline or short paragraph; otherwise, a page with a dark background becomes too much of a strain to read.

Tip #4: The way you use color on your site should enhance the mood.

Colors and moods are so intertwined that we often use colors to describe how we feel. For example, you're probably familiar with the common expressions "seeing red," "feeling blue," and "green with envy." Similarly, the use of color on your web site can affect the mood of your visitors and make the difference between visitors leaving quickly or staying around long enough to buy.

I am sure you have visited web sites that were so hard to read, and the colors so irritating, that you could not leave fast enough. The obtrusive colors removed all credibility from the offer and you probably didn't even stay around long enough to find out what was being offered.

If you have a sales site or a corporate site looking to attract investors, then your color selection will be different from a site that teaches children how to count. While this seems obvious, how many sites have you been to where the colors look like they have been chosen by a toddler -- where bright yellows, blues, greens, and reds distract from the message instead of enhancing it?

Some web sites scream at visitors with "in-your-face" florescent-like colors, while others soothe with softer tones. Orange, for example, is an "informal" color and can be used if you sell an expensive product that you wish to make appear affordable. Small amounts of yellow can add cheerfulness and capture attention, but too much yellow can make visitors uncomfortable. **Use a dash of yellow to highlight key points.** Dark blue and black convey "class" whereas earth tones and light blues are "practical" colors.

SPECIAL NOTE: Color can affect mood in subtle ways. It's not just that red is perceived as an "action" color and blue as a "soothing" color, but different shades of each color can have different effects. Chroma (the "richness" or "dullness" of a color) and the value (the amount of "whiteness" or "blackness") have a greater influence than the hue (the pigment of the color such as red, yellow, or blue).

Tip #5: Use color to unite your web site pages.

Every page of your site should tie in with the others to collectively create and communicate your message. You can create this effect by repeating your basic design and color elements on each of your web pages.

It's tempting to keep your basic page layout and then use different colors for your sales page, product pages, testimonials, and order form. For continuity's sake, don't do it. Let your colors "work" to help **maintain the mood of your site** and provide consistency throughout.

If you look at magazines, for example, you can open up to any editorial page and the "look" (layout, font, header color, footer color) will be the same every issue. The same should hold true for your web site. Color consistency ensures that your visitors never feel lost or like they have somehow left your site.

Tip #6: Use color to help visitors navigate your site.

If you have a sales site, you do not want your visitors to randomly surf in different sections. You want to carefully guide them through your sales process, creating value, and emphasizing benefits before revealing the price.

Color can help your visitors navigate by showing them exactly where to click next, highlighting points of interest, leading them step-by-step as your words and illustrations build the case for why they should not live another day without your product, and then escorting them to the order page.

For example, if your sales page contains headings that outline benefits or steps, you could highlight them all in one particular color. You could also use a background color for your testimonials, which you insert into your sales page.

Color can help readers get a quick overview of your site by directing the readers' eyes quickly from one section to the next, right through your various pages to the order form. Start with nothing emphasized and then slowly go through your site adding the same color to those phrases that offer a benefit to your readers.

You can assume that before visitors decide to invest their time to read your site, they will quickly glance at the highlights to see if your site offers information that directly interests them. Once readers know that your offer provides specific benefits that will help them, they are more likely to read your entire site from beginning to end.

Tip #7: Use color to get your visitors to take action.

No matter what type of site you have, from a family site with photos of your trip to Knott's Berry Farm, to a hard hitting sales site, you want your visitors to take an action. On your family site you might only want them to look at the photos of Uncle Ned getting soaked on the log ride, but there is always something you want visitors to do.

Many sites lose visitors right at the "moment of truth" -- that instant when they are finally deciding whether to pull out their credit card or leave it in their pocket. Here's where color can help your visitors by highlighting the "Simple Steps" they need to take to "instantly receive your product." In other words, use color to show prospective buyers what information they need to supply and exactly how to order.

Use color to draw their eyes to whatever action you want them to take, whether it be clicking a button to receive a "Special Report," downloading software, or placing an online order.

Tip #8: Be "color sensitive" culturally.

Color is very personal and affects women and men, children and adults, young and old, rich and poor, as well as cultures and religious groups in different ways. Green, for example, is associated in some Middle Eastern cultures with the prophet Mohammed, who wore a green turban. To the Chinese, yellow is sacred, but to the French, yellow signifies jealousy.

Red is a lucky color in China, black is very negative in India. In Brazil, purple represents death. If your web site is intended to influence visitors from different cultures, age groups, and income levels, then before your site goes "live" have some representatives of your intended market review your color choices to make sure they are appealing and convey your intended message.

SPECIAL NOTE: When we talk about the meanings associated with colors such as purple and royalty" or black and "sophistication," these reactions are based on the responses of mainstream North Americans. Since North America is a cultural mix, you can quickly see that there are no "rules," as such, for the symbolic meaning of colors, but rather broad, general guidelines that should be tested before being applied to your particular web site.

Tip #9: Use a color chart.

When you design your site, colors that appear one way on your browser may look quite different on others. To ensure all your visitors see close to what you want them to see, it's best to choose colors from a browser safe 216-color palette such as the one on [dotParagon](#). Your web design program may already have this color palette built in.

Whichever colors you choose, though, once you have finished designing your web site, I suggest you use the tool at [AnyBrowser.com](#) to see how your colors will look on a variety of

different browsers.

Tip #10: Test the colors to measure your results.

Our final tip takes us right back to the story I shared with you at the beginning of this article and it's the very best advice anyone could give you to guarantee the success of your online business -- TEST EVERYTHING.

Once you have the headline, body copy, and illustrations you want, leave your web site without changing anything except colors... and try testing different colors for your:

- Borders
- Logo
- Text font
- Background
- Header (menu or design at the top of your web page)
- Sidebar (menu or design at the side)
- Footer (menu or design at the bottom)
- Highlighted words and hyperlinks
- Every other place on your site that you have used color

You cannot assume that a blue background will produce better results than a yellow background in retaining visitors on your site, having them view more pages, leading them to the order page, or selling more of your products or services. If it were predictable, every top sales site in your field would have identical colors.

Once you know that red, for example, gives you better results than green, then you should continue your experiment by trying different shades of red, from lightest to darkest, richest to dullest, all the while searching for the magical color combination that leads to more visitors pulling out their credit cards and ordering.

Conclusion:

Just as the colors you wear can affect how you feel, the colors on your web site can affect the way visitors feel about your online business and offer. Color can relax visitors, establish trust, and make your site a pleasant oasis to visit. A poor color selection can cause visitors to feel uncomfortable and leave your site quickly.

The right colors for your web site today may be different next year because fashion, trends, and popular culture influence the colors that motivate buyers. Likewise, if you expand your

product offer into different countries, in addition to having your site translated, check to see if the colors have a particular significance within that culture.

Once you have designed your site, test your colors over a long period of time to make sure that it's the change of color that makes the difference in sales results, not the day of the week, season, or other factors. As you work through these tips, and your testing allows you to close in on the most suitable colors for your product, offer, and market, you will make your competitors "green" with envy as more and more profits find their way into your pocket.

Get the skills without the spills...

Finest Regards,

Boris Chow
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*Additional content provided by The IMC Content Research and Development Team.

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Boris Chow is a seasoned Internet marketer and member of the IMC Think Tank, the team of Internet marketing professionals who gather in the IMC Private Site to spill the beans about Web marketing breakthroughs -- as they happen!

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