



Photo courtesy of Everbrite

# True Colors

*A facility's hue makes a big impact with customers, surrounding communities.*

By Laura Fries

To distinguish her salon from the gray city tones of Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, Elizabeth Arden painted her front door bright red. A bold business move, to be sure, but more than 100 years later her salons—and that red door—live on as a symbol of her successful beauty empire.

Color choices probably seem like a low priority in a self storage business plan, but many successful companies are associated with distinguishing hues. Public Storage is known for a bold orange, Extra Space is associated with calming green, CubeSmart and a deep red door go hand in hand, and Uncle Bob's features a bright blue and yellow combination.

Even if you aren't creating a brand image, but just want to paint something appealing, choosing a color to represent your business is a smart move. According to Sarah Schuda, a color expert from Sarah Lynn Design, the right shade of paint can elicit specific emotional responses.

By choosing the perfect shade of yellow, for instance, you can instill customers with a sense of optimism and intellect. The right brown will convey no-nonsense as

well as a sense of security. Pick the wrong shade of these colors, however, and you may send subliminal messages of cowardice or lack of imagination.

"Choosing colors for any structure should take into consideration the environment it is placed in," said Schuda. "With any new development, you'll want to consider the surrounding buildings and make sure the structure fits in with the look and feel of existing buildings so it's not an eyesore in the community. The safest colors are either neutral (gray, tan, cream) or colors that occur in nature such as blues and greens."

## Preserving Colors

Teresa Sedmak, president of Everbrite, Inc., has a lot of experience with color—mainly restoring it. While her company doesn't handle paint, the Everbrite product provides a clear protective coating that can bring storage facilities back to their original, vibrant color. And for some special storage facilities, such as one in Yucca Valley, Cali-

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fornia, that means restoring a vibrant Western-themed mural painted to fit in with the location.

“An artist did a beautiful mural on Grand Central Storage in Yucca Valley, complete with an old-fashioned train, a Western landscape and a beautiful blue sky,” said Sedmak. “The artist later passed away, but the owner wanted to preserve this great piece of art. The mural started to fade, and we made it brand new again with Everbrite.”

All weather can be tough on paint, but Sedmak said owners shouldn’t be afraid of color. Any color can be used and Everbrite can maintain the original color, as well as stop any rusting, so you have more color options.

Because of environmental changes to the chemical makeup of paint, newer formulas are more subject to fading, especially white, which can wear down to the metal. White, said Sedmak, can also attract graffiti—but for one particular facility in East Oakland, California, that can be a good thing.

“A Safe Storage USA facility in Oakland had a big, plain white wall that was a target for graffiti,” said Sedmak. “But the owners got the idea to invite local graffiti artists to come and make it official. They gave several artists a section of the wall to make their own, and it is a source of pride instead of a neighborhood eyesore.”

Now called the Oakland Wall of Fame, this self storage facility wall is listed as a city sightseeing stop.

### Blending In

If fences make good neighbors, it follows that a thoughtful paint job can create community goodwill—and loyal customers. Brian Schad, corporate facilities manager of Public Storage, saw the demo and rebuild of a facility in the Glassell Park community of Los Angeles go from just ordinary to something really special.

“We had a first generation, single-story Public Storage building,” he explained. “We demoed a portion and put plans through the city to add more stories and a tilt-wall building. We got approval from the city, and it was going great. Literally, the day we put the tilt walls up, we heard from the city.”

Turns out that the building, which was at the base of an off ramp, blocked the neighborhood view of the hillside and houses. Neighbors didn’t like the idea of staring at a thirty-foot raw concrete wall. Even

though Public Storage already had city permits in hand, they listened to the community and made some artistic changes.

“To appease everybody,” said Schad, “we listened to what people wanted. And not only did we paint the sides, we painted the roof as well. We spent extra money doing it to satisfy the city. But we also took a portion of the building and donated it as a community center. Now, if you look from the top of the hill down on the building, it blends with the landscape, and that’s what people wanted.”

The building isn’t just a business, it’s part of the community—and a popular one at that. “The facility does very well and the community knows we are there and are happy to have us,” said Schad.

Working with city ordinances and neighborhood associations can make any construction go smoother and lay the foundation for goodwill and potential customers. Even if there aren’t any restrictions, you can consider your building colors with the community in mind and still project a successful, professional appearance.

Still, picking a color is one of the hardest choices in both residential and commercial building and is the top issue clients struggle with, according to Schuda. If you are having trouble whittling down options, there are some basic rules to follow.

“If your storage units are near a residential area, I would recommend a more neutral palette,” said Schuda. “If you’re in an industrial or commercial area, you could probably get away with a more vivid color palette for your storage doors such as a navy or primary blue.

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<p><b>blue</b></p> <p>TRUST SMART CALM FAITH NATURAL STABLE POWER</p>	<p><b>red</b></p> <p>LOVE IMMEDIACY ENERGY SALE PASSION ANGER HUNGER</p>	<p><b>black</b></p> <p>BOLD RICH POWER MYSTERY ELEGANCE EVIL STRENGTH</p>	<p><b>green</b></p> <p>SOOTHING ECO-FREINDLY NATURAL ENVY JEALOUSY BALANCE RESTFUL</p>
<p><b>yellow</b></p> <p>CHEER ATTENTION CHILDISH FRESH WARMTH ENERGY OPTIMISM</p>	<p><b>orange</b></p> <p>HEALTH ATTRACTION STAND OUT THIRST WEALTH YOUTHFUL HAPPINESS</p>	<p><b>pink</b></p> <p>TENDERNESS SENSITIVE CARING EMOTIONAL SYMPATHETIC LOVE SEXUALITY</p>	<p><b>purple</b></p> <p>ROYAL MYSTERIOUS ARROGANT LUXURY CHILDISH CREATIVE SADNESS</p>

Color chart courtesy of Sarah Lynn Design / [www.sarahlynnndesign.com](http://www.sarahlynnndesign.com)

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“It’s also important to consider your own brand and make sure your color choices align with your company’s colors if they exist,” she added. “But that should come secondary to pleasing others around you to ensure the success of your business. Community matters more than your own personal branding in this case.”

### Trademarking a Color

Companies often trademark their color, meaning a specific color is legally synonymous with a specific brand. Popular examples include Tiffany & Co. blue, Home Depot orange and UPS brown.

Trademarking doesn’t mean you can never use those colors, just not in the same line of business, and especially not in the same kind of way. Yellow letters on a green background in the lawn care industry would be an infringement of John Deere, but painting your house Tiffany Blue is perfectly okay—just maybe not with your neighbors.

Public Storage has a trademark for its logo combination of orange, purple, yellow and white. Other storage owners can use these colors, but not in any way that makes it look like a Public Storage property.



Photos courtesy of Public Storage

“There is a concept in the law that is called trade dress,” said Carlos Kaslow, general counsel for the Self Storage Association. “You cannot have a product that looks so much like another product that it creates confusion.”

Unlike patents or copyrights, Kaslow said trademarks are a “squishy” area. If you have any concerns or questions, it’s best to consult your legal team before you crack open the paint cans. ❖

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