



What Your Suit Color Says About You — and Can Mean to Your Business

—Before you say a word, the color of your suit creates an impression—

What leads consumers to purchase one relatively similar product over another? In many cases, it is the packaging and appearance of the product they choose that resonates with the consumer's emotions, leading to the purchase. While subsequent purchases are more likely tied to a product's actual performance, the initial decision is largely based on appearance.

This scenario can also be expanded to the business world. In business, individuals are substituted for the product and the suits they wear serves as the packaging. Every day, otherwise highly qualified people are passed over for promotions and business opportunities simply because they don't "look the part" in the eyes of the decision-maker — much like a consumer choosing one product over another on a store shelf.

Studies reflect that of the factors evaluated in a product's packaging — size, shape, graphics, text, color and finish — color is recognized first and carries the greatest emotional impact. In regards to the businessperson's packaging — the suit — while the fit and quality of the suit's cloth are important, the garment's color is what forms the first impression for the people they engage.

Suit Colors and Their Meanings

According to Christian Boehm, vice president and director of merchandising and marketing for The Tom James Company, the company's most popular colors chosen for business suits by clients are: navy, charcoal and earthtones. "Each color conveys its own meanings and brings about a certain set of responses," said Boehm.

Boehm added, two themes that resonate through all the color selections are that the darker the color of the suit, the higher the perceived authority of the person wearing the ensemble. And secondly, the inclusion of stripes on a suit adds a sense of power to the wearer.

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The following matches the colors with particular business situations they are prudent for:

- ❑ **Navy** is appropriate for important meetings and presentations. Boehm said, "Navy means authority. It is the best color for negotiating and is the universal color for power, thus that's why you see many attorneys and bankers in navy."
- ❑ **Charcoal** conveys a sense of security. "Executives should wear charcoal when acquiring new businesses, attending stockholder's meetings or making important financial decisions," stated Boehm.
- ❑ **Earhtone** colors portray a person who is down-to-earth and understanding. They are your best rapport-building colors. "Earhtones are a good choice for anyone meeting with an unhappy client or investor, reviewing an employee, meeting with a small business owner or attending a staff meeting," commented Boehm.