



SIGN DESIGN AND EFFECTIVE CONTRAST

Part 1- Color Contrast

From a recent survey of our newsletter subscribers, here are the top reasons sign buyers within a 150-mile radius of Richmond, VA purchase electric signs:

- Attraction of Customers
- Stand Out Over Local Competitors
- Customer Interaction with Brand

Since the top reasons customers invest in signage involve maximizing visibility, how should the sign designer address effective color combinations?

Do's & Don'ts of Color Contrast

Do choose lighter tone backgrounds for darker tone logos and vice versa. Don't choose background/graphics colors that lie next to each other on the color wheel unless they are outlined or backed up with a better contrasting "cloud" color. This should be clear in the following examples:



Since many signs are individually mounted channel letters and logos on buildings or monument walls made of brick, stone, or tinted stucco materials, you need to pay close attention to color combinations to



Here are examples how blues can lose their impact when placed on dark backgrounds. The "MedExpress" brand loses punch over the blue tile accent stripe of the previous Blockbuster building in Lynchburg. A better solution may have been white letters with blue returns.
The triangular and swish elements of the nTelos brand lose visibility when placed upon the black background of the sign cabinet's face. Utilizing black letters and blue triangle/swish colors on a white background framed in black would have been more consistent with the corporate brand plus would offer greater visibility of a recognizable brand.

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Notice the contrast change of the logo from white to red. The white has good 24-hour visibility on the copper background, while the red lacks punch during the daytime due to poor contrast even with the black letter returns.



Here is a good example of how outlines and "cloud" backgrounds help push white letters from white backgrounds. Notice how the "Ollie's" sign lacks the visibility of the "Great Clips" which has the black "cloud" to separate the whites of the graphic and wall.

achieve the best result. (If you're branding a regional chain of stores, the same sign design will not necessarily fit every building application.) Other things to consider in initial design are:

- Degree of cast shadows that can either help or hurt the color combination;
- Potential of using outline colors or "clouds" around the letters to improve contrast;
- Night-time conditions and lighting where background and/or graphics colors change;
- Adjusting shades and tones of the colors to make them work.



In summary, choosing the right color combinations for your signage is one important element of effective branding leading to customer attraction and retention. Holiday Signs can help!