



A SPECIALTY-RETAILING.COM COMMUNITY

Issue Date: , Posted On: 11/22/2010

### Expert Advice: Make your Café a Unique Experience

By Morgan Greenseth and Melanie Corey-Ferrini, Dynamikspace, Seattle

Colors, seating, aesthetics, and that wow factor - are these trends all important when considering how to create your café experience. What is your customer, your image, your café culture, your vibe, and your location?

Trends come and go, so when creating your space, really know your customer, the coffee culture that you want to create, and what distinguishes you and your brand.

Colors have a psychology that will set the tone for your space and your brand.

Warm ever-popular earth toned surroundings remain popular. These colors have been a beacon of coffee and comfort to those passing by. So what is the new hip color?

We tend to follow the fashion colors that are local to your location, since space and furnishings usually follow suit. Warm colors will always be popular in cafes as long as cafes are looking to create that community, that third place. It tends to keep customers in your space, comfortable and cozy. This sense of cozy and community has also been further enhanced with the inclusion of central features such as fireplaces in cool climates and water features in warm climates.

How are the trendiest cafes furnishing themselves? How have cafe aesthetics changed? How aware of the green movement are you customers?

With the increasing awareness of our affect on the environment, tax incentives, and LEED, the green movement is not only transforming where coffee beans are sourced, but also the materials that the cafe is created from. Eco-friendly products are usually offered in the earthtones that coffee houses have loved for years, making it an easy and convenient switch.

Salvaged and reclaimed materials have also become trendy. From gym floor tables, to reused industrial lighting to reupholstered vintage chairs, using things from the past helps you stay fresh.

Some cafes have decided to create a focal point around an object, such as a special antique or salvaged piece. They want to be unique and by having a one of a kind object, it's easy to do so. With so many options out there, cafes must create an identity that is unique and one that sticks in the customer's memory - building relationships with your customer is invaluable! Other unique pieces that are being seen are custom chandeliers, graphic walls and even roasting machines.

Coffee roasters aren't the most glamorous pieces of equipment to look at, yet they are becoming a prominent feature of cafes that roast their own beans. Customers want to see the whole coffee process nowadays. It's that culture of authentic that we see in so many specialty stores. We're seeing a much more open plan for cafes that give views to the behind the scenes work along with the dance of the barista. Customers want to interact with the person making their drink, whether it be at the espresso machine or by the "pour over stand".

Interactions with the barista are the only kind desired by customers. A sense of community is returning to cafes, but in a new form. Less lounge seating, community tables and long, skinny standing bar. Very similar to what Italy has been doing from the beginning.

With the inclusion of beer and wine in some shops and food options, it's becoming a community hub. This is really changing the flow and space plan of cafes. Your experience needs to be suitable for both day and night. Lighting must be dimmable and your color, texture, and overall aesthetic must be flexible to be comfortable at all times of the date. With the late night entertainment option available, spaces are more flexible with folding chairs and tables - making way for live music or other events.

One last trend is designing for or against wireless internet. Cafes are either open to all customers using their laptops, either all day or by the hour; or they are completely against it. We're noticing more electrical outlet locations and seating for individuals, usually along a bar near a window. In contrast, some cafes (usually under 1,000 square feet) are creating standing only bars that are too narrow for laptops, seating that encourages quick stops rather than prolonged use.

Cafes today must make an impact on potential customers with both their product and their interior experience in order to grab the attention and sustain in their memory. With the multitude of options available, unique, sustainable experiences are desired so that relationships can build within the community, customers and cafe.

Morgan Greenseth is a Senior Interior Designer and Melanie Corey-Ferrini, an Experience Architect with Dynamikspace in Seattle. [www.dynamikspace.com](http://www.dynamikspace.com)

