

Jeff Watts, Datacolor, explains the reasons behind and the processes for successful colour management

# Why the success of architectural coatings depends on colour management



Brands and their buildings are often associated with specific colours, the secret key of which is unique, or most especially, consistent colour. Consider the Pacific Design Center in California (above) or the famous San Francisco Painted Ladies – landmark structures that are as memorable in appearance as their brands are well-known around the world.

As many of us know, architectural coatings are often used to coat a building or signage of a building so that its colours are lasting and memorable. They also provide numerous benefits to buildings beyond vibrancy, including impact resistance, weather resistance and corrosion resistance. All of this is critical to the structural and aesthetic success of a building.

With the right colour matching and formation solution, manufacturers can create paint and stains that help build their brand reputation, inspire beautiful homes and spaces, and doing so faster and more cost efficiently. The process starts by measuring colour samples with confidence using a reference grade spectrophotometer, then save time and money with accurate first-shot matches using smart matching formulation software. Once formulated, the match can then be evaluated and numerical colour information can be shared with quality control software to enable objective pass/fail decisions for production batches.

**Quick Tip:** ‘Colour tolerance’ is a limit to how big the difference in colour between a sample and the standard is allowed to be for the sample to be considered

acceptable. For proper colour on architectural coatings, tolerances vary greatly depending on the colour chosen. Tolerancing is an extremely difficult task without proper equipment.

Coatings clearly serve a vital role in physically protecting an organisation’s building and, indirectly, its reputation. Thus, planning for colour is an important part of the design and building process and the connection of colour and architectural coatings is held together by a precise, efficient colour management system.

## ■ HERE’S WHY:

### 1. ACHIEVING CONSISTENCY:

Consistency is critical in all aspects of business, and it goes well beyond the bottom line. Appearance consistency is vital for any consumer-facing business. Disorganisation with branding and signage can lead to a sloppy, unreliable look and have a lasting negative connotation in the eyes of consumers. For restaurants, retail stores and other chains with locations all over the world, the only way to achieve consistent colour throughout locations is to use colour matching software. If a brand is associated with a particular shade of blue (think: Tiffany & Co), it’s vital that, that exact blue is used across all locations, materials





**San Francisco's famous Painted Ladies**

and properties. The coatings that make that shade of blue need to be consistent and colour matching software achieves this.

**2. CHOOSING THE RIGHT PIGMENTS:**

As stated above, the right pigments achieve the right colour and look. The wrong ones don't. What's less obvious is the fact that incorrect pigments can cause fading and material distress to show up much earlier, causing an overall look of deterioration that is far more jarring than the wrong shade of red. Colour matching software helps builders choose the exact right pigments and control all environmental variables that can affect their selection.

Multiple environmental factors, such as temperature, humidity and geographical location will affect how colour appears. This is especially true when coloured or pigmented coatings are exposed to the elements. If the correct pigments are not used for a desired colour, that colour may fade dramatically and change over a short period of time. Precise colour management ensures that colour is consistent and resistant regardless of whether coatings are being applied in the desert or the tropics.

**3. COMPLETE PROJECTS EARLIER:**

One major challenge the architectural coatings industry faces is speed to market. For a building process to work properly, there needs to be a colour formula for every colour and every product in a store. The number of colours this can translate to is enormous, laying a tremendous amount of pressure on coatings manufacturers to get the colours right. A computerised colour matching system decreases the number of errors by individuals attempting to match colours and drastically increases the speed in which products and building supplies can be turned around. With the colours digitally confirmed, builders have peace of mind that the colour (and the coating) will be right every time.

**4. SAVE TIME AND RESOURCES:**

Colour inaccuracy equals time and money, wasted. At the very least, one wrong colour can lead to a perceived lack of quality on the part of the consumer. Beyond the very least, one wrong colour can lead to a massive recall of sub-standard products, re-application of the right coatings over the wrong ones over a period of hours, days or weeks, or the obvious, visual deterioration of the architecture to which the coating is applied. All of it amounts to

money and time lost in the effort to correct a simple error.

Given the significant impact that colour matching holds over the coatings industry (and many others beyond it), great strides are continuously being taken to advance colour management technology, whether it's in the lab or on-site:

- **Portable colour matching:** Portable devices add a level of specificity with colour. Any colour anywhere can be matched and logged for future use, ensuring that the right pigments are employed in all relevant paints and coatings. When a unique colour catches the eye of a builder, a portable colour matching device can find and save that colour in seconds.
- **Cloud enabled software/apps:** Cloud-enabled software and mobile applications are making unique colours easier to find and store. Collaboration has never been easier, and now multiple offices have access to each other's colour data to ensure consistency of same colour across geographic regions.

Influential structures have a lasting impact on their neighbourhoods and cities and they're usually defined by their appearance. Colour is one trait that stays in the mind of onlookers and the only way to ensure a lasting, consistent colour on a structure is to perform accurate colour management from the very start of a building's long journey to landmark status.

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**Tikkurila responds to the changing exterior colour trends**

Tikkurila has renewed its exterior colour cards to serve the needs of the professional and consumer customers better than ever. All façade colours have been collected into one convenient Facade 760 colour fan deck, and new bright colours have been added to the colour collection.

The comprehensive Facade 760 collects durable exterior colour options for mineral, wood and metal surfaces together in one single collection.

"The current colour spectrum of stone façades is fairly wide, and architects do not hesitate to use strong colours. Recently, bright colours have become more common

in the details of stone façades in particular but in the future, you might also see them on larger mineral surfaces.

"I believe that the use of colour will become increasingly clearer in the future, and instead of focusing on one single building, the facade will be seen as a part of the whole block of houses with respect to colours, too. I feel that the new, brighter colours also affect the exterior colours of wooden houses, especially as wooden apartment houses are becoming more common. Now bright colours can be combined with earthy tones, such as in stone façades, which is definitely a positive change," says the architect Mikko Rosti.

Based on the colour statistics by Tikkurila, a more minimalist colour scheme has continued to triumph in the consumers' exterior colour choices for the past five years.

"In the Nordic countries, grey is often seen as a natural choice, because we often repeat the colours of the scenery in our exterior colours. As the palette has become more limited, trendsetters, such as architects, have begun to favour bright colours in building façades. Therefore, the new Facade 760 colour system meets the demand for both grey and bright colours," says Marika Raike, who is responsible for Tikkurila's colour materials.