



Your Business Card

Your Most Powerful Marketing & Networking Weapon

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History of the Business Card

Business cards are a common yet critical form of marketing and advertising. Business cards have supported the exchange of information between business and customer for as far back as the 15th century in China. According to Natalie Aranda in *A Brief History of Business Cards*, "The business card began as a "visiting card" or a calling card with very strict etiquette rules. The card eventually moved from its social beginnings to a business purpose with the introduction of the trade card. The trade card was designed to direct the public to a merchant's location and usually contained a map and directions. With the advent of lithography in the early 1800's, colors became more important and the idea of business cards spread in popularity to the United States, becoming mainstay. With the introduction of new materials for the cards such as plastic and magnetic backed cards, and the wide spread use of color business cards, the business card industry continues to evolve today. A business card is a must for anyone who deals with the public today, and for many it is one of the most important marketing and advertising tools.

What Makes a Good Business Card

Your business card is a formal representation of you, your company, your products/services and your unique selling proposition. It can be considered an introduction, mini-brochure or even a gift, by some. Business cards include comprehensive contact information suggesting a response and/or a call to action from the recipient. In marketing terms, business cards can be a form of a leave behind, or "a premium left with prospective customers by a sales person, to remind them of the product or service being sold." (About.com) As business cards are usually the only tactile representation of a formal meeting, they can clearly make the difference in how you, your company and/or your products/services are perceived. So, is your business card a good one? Does it achieve a marketing objective? Does it scream the quality, culture and tone you want to be recognized by your existing and prospect customers? Will it help you generate and/or build business?

Following are some questions to ask when judging a business card:

- 1. Is your card a clear representation of you, your business and/or products and services?** Does your card scream who you are, what your business does, why you're unique and why that's important to those who come in contact with it? Does it clearly communicate the tone, culture and look/feel that you want to be remembered as or for? Is it professional and high quality? Or, is your card limp and/or homemade looking. Is it consistent with your other marketing materials and branding?
- 2. Is it memorable?** Does your card leave a lasting impression with those come in contact with it? Or, do you get lost with all the rest? Is it different, cool, fun, and engaging? Does it beg the recipient to want to know/learn more? Consider a professional picture, image and/or bright color to have it stand out and be

connecting you to a world of good business



remembered. If you are in a profession where relationship selling is important, it is suggested to include your picture on your business card.

3. **Is it attractive and engaging?** Or does your card look cluttered and busy, use colors poorly and/or is too difficult to read? Don't use clip art whatever you do.
4. **Does your card use the real estate (space) effectively and efficiently?** Is your business card well laid out or do graphics and copy compete? Is it clean and easy to read? Is there anything on the back of your card (keeping in mind that 50% of the time cards end up on desks back side facing forward)? You may consider a QR code with information about you and your company to support more interactive content.
5. **Is your business card easy to read?** Consider high contrast between the background and the type. Light background with dark type works better. Make sure font size is not too small that it's difficult to read. Experts suggest that after your logo, your name should be the largest element on the card.

How to Best Use Your Business Card as a Powerful Marketing Weapon

Here are some tips from Mario Sanchez 50 Surefire Business Card Tips on how to best use your business cards (for the full list visit:

<http://www.accordmarketing.com/businesscards/>)

- Leave your business cards in billboards at supermarkets, schools, stores, libraries, etc.
- When giving away your card, give two or three at a time, so that your contacts can in turn distribute them to other people. This will not only help you distribute them faster, but will generate a beneficial "endorsing effect".
- Include a business card with all your correspondence. People may throw away the letter, but will usually keep the business card.
- Throw in a business card in every product you ship.
- Send a business card with any gift you send, instead of just a card with your name.
- Use your business card as a name tag on your briefcase. Make sure that your company logo and tagline are visible. This way, your business card will turn into a "conversation piece" during plane rides, which may help you meet interesting people and good business contacts.
- Don't give your business card too quickly. It may be perceived as pushy. Try to establish a conversation with your prospect first. For example, ask them what do they do. That will usually prompt them to give you their card. That is the perfect moment to give them yours.
- Don't try to give your card in situations where many people are giving them to your prospect. Wait for a moment when you can capture your prospect's attention span.
- Another tactic you can try when your prospect is overwhelmed and can't pay you enough attention is to send your card by mail. Pretend you ran out of business cards and ask for theirs. Then, mail them your card and take the opportunity to drop a follow up note.
- If you have a mobile phone number or a direct phone number that is not listed in your business card, write it at the back of your card before handing it out, and tell



your prospect that you are giving them your direct number. This will make your card more important, and less likely to be lost or thrown out.

- *Offer to hand out cards of complementary (non-competitive) business people in exchange for them distributing yours. An example of non-competitive businesses is real estate brokers and mortgage brokers.*
- If somebody gives you their business card, you should give them yours in return.
- Always give your business card face up.
- Take a cue from Far East business people, who hand out business cards with both hands. It helps give the impression that your business card is something very important.
- When receiving somebody else's business card, don't put it away immediately. Instead, keep it in your hand for a while you talk to your prospect, or place it neatly over the table, and try to develop a conversation based on the information on the card.
- Use the back of the cards you receive to write down important facts about the persons who handed them to you. It will help you enormously when you follow up with them.

Wrap Up

At the end of the day, no matter how you use your business card, it won't be the marketing weapon it could be unless it *looks professional, is easy to read, and helps customers and prospects remember what you sell and why they should buy it from you.*

About the Author

Angelo Biasi is General Manager of SMART Marketing Solutions, LLC, a leading full-service integrated marketing company in Naples, FL since 2001. He has helped create and execute marketing plans and integrated marketing solutions for companies such as Playtex, Bic, Rogaine, Tauck, and over 35 colleges and universities, to name a few. Angelo has an MBA in Marketing from the University of Connecticut and has taught Marketing at New York University for over five years. For more information or to learn more, email him at abiasi@smartmarketingllc.com, visit www.smartmarketingllc.com or call 239.963.9396.