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# PRINTtips

## Make Your Business Cards Work For You



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**Y**our business card. When you started your own business, it was probably the first thing you had printed. Or when you joined your company, your business cards may have been waiting for you on your first day of employment. You may even have saved a business card from your very first job – that’s how powerful it is to see your name in print.

**Why we have business cards**

It is generally agreed that a business card performs the following basic functions:

- to introduce you and your company to potential customers, suppliers, or colleagues; and
- to provide all the relevant information by which someone can contact you.

In addition, a business card can serve as an advertising function – a mini billboard that describes your competitive edge or gives reasons why someone should consider doing business with you.

Other reasons why someone would accept your business card were identified by Dr. Lynella Grant in her publication *The Business Card Book*. According to Dr. Grant, someone is likely to keep your business card for a personal or social reason; in order to give your card to someone else (a sort of third-party business referral); to update your contact information from a previously-accepted business card; or because your business card is “likeable, unusual, or useful.”

**What you should have on your business card**

Keeping in mind the function of providing all relevant contact information, your business card should contain the name of the business, your name and title, all relevant phone numbers (office, direct, cell, pager), FAX number, business address (mailing and physical), e-mail address; and company url.

Other things that may be included on your business card (space permitting) are the company’s tag line or other definition of the type of business (this is particularly important if the business name does not convey the nature of the business), personal academic designations or business accreditations, and additional languages you speak (if important to conducting business).

**Business card “real estate”**

With the addition of multiple phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and company urls, it is becoming harder to fit complete contact information on one side of a standard 2 x 3 1/2 inch business card. This is, in our opinion, a great waste of available business card “real estate”.

Because so few businesses print on the reverse of a business card, your two-sided card will automatically stand out. And if the card is printed on a stock that is the same on the front and back,



## Make Your Business Cards Work For You (continued)

we may be able to offer more economical back printing by using a technique called *work and turn* that allows us to print on both sides of the card using only one set of press plates. For more information, call us for more information.

If all your contact information fits comfortably on the front of the card, then you can use back printing for advertising or to make your card, in the words of Dr. Grant, “likeable, unusual, or useful.” Some things besides contact information that fit nicely on the back of a business card are:

- your company’s mission statement
- a series of lines for writing notes
- your company’s advertising message or tag line
- useful information related to your company’s line of business
- listing of your company’s products and services
- testimonials from satisfied customers
- coupon or special offer
- date and time of next appointment
- map or directions to your location

### Enhancements to standard business cards

An eye-catching business card may cause people to save it even if they haven’t identified a need for your product or service. To enhance a standard 2 x 3 1/2 inch flat business card, consider some of the following:

- *Change the stock.* For a standard business card, we recommend using a stock thick enough so it won’t feel flimsy when cut down to business card size. Standard cover weights for business cards are 65# and 80# basis weight, but this doesn’t necessarily imply anything about stock thickness. Ask us to show you examples of 100# cover or even double ply stock. Alternately, you might consider printing on a specialty paper such as wood grain.
- *Change the shape.* A folded business card gives extra surfaces on which to display a photograph, eye-catching graphics, contact information, or valuable content. Although

this makes the business card thicker after folding, it will still fit inside a standard business card holder. Or change the card’s orientation from horizontal (landscape) to vertical (portrait). Do be aware that a vertical orientation means that your card will be turned 90 degrees when placed inside a standard business card holder.

- *Foiling, embossing, or die cutting.* Adding foil or embossing not only enhances the richness of your card, it adds a tactile sensation that many people find pleasing. Because these processes add to the cost of business cards, it can convey a sense of success and prosperity to your business.

### Business card design basics

Basic business card design begins with common sense. The card must be legible and logically organized. This means controlling the amount of information on the card so the type is large enough to read easily, and grouping similar contact information. For instance, the business information (name, office phone and FAX, and address) is a logical grouping. So is the individual information (person’s name and title, direct line, cell phone, and pager).

Another design decision is what information to feature prominently. Decide whether to emphasize the name of the business or the name of the individual, then create the emphasis with type size or weight. Other information that can be prominently displayed include the individual’s telephone number and e-mail address.

A traditional business card design places the contact information in the lower half of the card, either flush left, flush right, or centered. If more than one telephone number is given, it is customary to emphasize the preferred number by placing it first or by making it a different point size or weight.

Another possibility is to adapt the Ogilvy display ad layout formula to your business card. The formula adheres to the order in which researchers tell us readers typically look at ads: visual (photo or graphic), caption, headline, copy, and signature (your name and contact information).

*“Some things besides contact information that fit nicely on the back of a business card...”*

*“This means controlling the amount of information on the card so the type is large enough to read easily...”*

## Make Your Business Cards Work For You (continued)

To adapt the Ogilvy to your business card, place the visual (your logo) at the top or upper left of the card, followed by the headline (business or individual's name). Place the signature (contact information) in the lower right of the card.

### Business card appearance

Crucial to the success of your business card is its appearance. A card that is poorly designed, contains information that has been handwritten, has perforated rather than clean-cut edges, or is soiled or worn-looking, conveys a negative impression of the person offering the card. To make the best impression, let us print

and cut your card with our professional-grade equipment.

### The final word

No matter what decisions you make regarding your business card design and printing, we urge you to use them! If your supply of business cards is older than one year, then get busy passing them out. Think of business cards as an advertising expense, not an office supply, and compare the cost of buying 500 or 1000 per year to the cost of yellow pages advertising or direct mail marketing. In this context, we're sure you'll agree that business cards represent a real bargain.

*"Think of business cards as an advertising expense..."*

## Get Those Cards Circulating

**C**onsidering the importance of business cards as a marketing tool, it is a good idea to have them handy at all times. Besides keeping them in your purse or wallet, also put a supply in the glove compartment of your car, in your briefcase, in your business planner, on your desk, at the reception desk in your business, and also keep some handy at home. One of the alternate locations may be closer than your purse or wallet, or you can use the alternate locations to replenish your regular supply. We also recommend keeping your business cards in a case or holder to protect

them from becoming dirty or worn-looking.

Now, get those cards circulating! In addition to handing out your cards during business meetings, use them any time you need to give someone contact information. If you are attending a mixer or conference, or are visiting a customer or supplier, use your business card as a name tag. When attending to personal business, give out your business card if appropriate. It may be a conversation-starter and could lead to a discussion of business matters.



*"...it is a good idea to have them handy at all times."*

**Q.** *I want to include my photograph on my business card. How can I get the best result?*

**A.** Begin by remembering that the size of the photograph, when printed on the business card, will be *thumbnail* size in order to

fit pleasingly on the business card. A standard business card measures 2 x 3 1/2 inches, and by convention there is a 1/8 inch "border" of white space on all four sides. This means the live area of the card is 1 3/4 x 3 1/4 inches, so the maximum height of the photograph is 1 3/4 inches.

For best results, give us a photograph that is as close to the final size as possible. If submitting the photograph as a digital file, use 300 dpi resolution, again in a size as close to the final size as possible.

Acceptable file formats are Encapsulated Postscript (.eps); Tagged Image File Format (.tif) or JPEG (.jpg) if the resolution is high enough.



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## When Business Cards... ...are not really business cards

**W**hen is a business card not a business card? When something other than business card information is printed on business card-sized stock. The standard business card size of 2 x 3 1/2 inches can, if well-designed, be used for a variety of other marketing-related uses. Some of these include:

- **Loyalty cards:** these are the "buy some, get some free" cards that people carry around in their wallets.
- **Coupon cards:** the whole card can function as a coupon for something free, for a discount, or for a gift with purchase.
- **Referral cards:** organizations that recruit for new members such as clubs, professional groups, or even churches can list their meeting times and dates.
- **Appointment cards:** these can be single-sided or have business



card information on the reverse.

- **Event cards:** these serve as admission tickets.
- **Gift cards:** serve as mini-greeting cards or attribution cards.
- **Survey cards:** contain a brief customer survey.

By using the business card size, you will be providing something that's familiar to your customers or prospects.