

Time to Give Business Cards a Makeover

By Diana Ratliff

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Business Card Secrets <http://www.businesscarddesign.com>

Business cards are the most popular marketing tool of small business, yet their very familiarity means they're often overlooked or under-utilized when advertising strategies are implemented. "Build Your Business with Business Cards Week," celebrated October 12-18, is a prime opportunity to update old or ineffective cards, according to business card expert Diana Ratliff of www.businesscarddesign.com.

Ratliff, author of the "Business Card Basics" design guides, offers the following tips for business people stuck with generic, company-designed cards:

- Use your imagination to "tweak" the existing card. Add a sticker, write your name or a discount offer on the back, highlight your guarantee, use fancy scissors to dress up the edges, or punch a hole in the card. Anything you can do to personalize your business card will increase its likelihood of being kept and remembered.
- Package your card creatively. Use removable adhesive to stick it inside a classy note card or deliver your business card with style in an attractively wrapped box for immediate impact.
- Accompany business card presentations with memorable actions. Handing your business card to someone with both hands, for example, is a simple way to add psychological importance to the card. Learning a magic trick using business cards or using an unusual business card case are also effective tactics.

If it's time for new cards (your information is out of date, you have new products or services to highlight or your card simply needs a fresh look), consider:

- Adding color to your cards. The vast majority of cards are printed in black ink on white card stock. Use colored card stock and your card is immediately more noticeable than 90% of your competitor's cards. Online business card printers such as <http://www.bizcardguru.com> offer full-color printing on thousands of eye-catching backgrounds for a very modest price.
- Printing more than one card. Many entrepreneurs fulfill more than one role, own more than one business, or use business cards in varying situations. It's a false economy to cram a great deal of information onto a single business card.
- Using your business card as a marketing tool as well as a means of conveying contact information. Craft a business card that explains what you do and why someone should hire you to do it. For many people, an address is not essential information on a business card. The space could be better utilized by adding product benefits, store hours or a guarantee.

Event ideas and handouts (including a Business Card Critique and Business Card Bingo) for "Build Your Business with Business Cards Week" are located at <http://www.businesscarddesign.com/bizcardweek.html>

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Diana Ratliff is passionate about making your marketing materials work as hard as YOU do. For a free guide, "How to Design a Compelling Business Card", send a blank email to <mailto:bizcardtips@getresponse.com> or visit <http://www.businesscarddesign.com>

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