

Thirty Creative Ways to Use Business Cards

By Linda Elizabeth Alexander

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On the Back

1. Print a team's sports schedule on the back. Fans will keep them handy and keep your name in front of them
2. Print a special discount offer or coupon on the back. People will keep it because they intend to use the coupon.
3. If you do seminars, print key principals on the back. Your attendees will refer to them later and think of you.
4. Hand write on the back your "unlisted" 800 number. This adds value to your card, making people keep it longer because they don't want to lose the special number.

Ad Specialties

5. Make the business card the ad specialty: Print your company information on letter openers, CD openers, magnets, pens, highlighters, keychains, mousepads, mugs, luggage tags, and other items that people will keep because they are useful.

6. Attach a business card to an ad specialty: For example, give business card holders as a thank you gift and place your business card in as the first one. Or, have your card designed as a Rolodex card

7. If you routinely give out seasonal gifts or specialties, attach your business card. Examples: candy canes at Christmas, heart shaped containers filled with candy for Valentine's Day, or even a sandwich bag of candy with a card stapled to it.

Unique Places to Put Them

8. Tuck them into the product before delivery: If you are a florist, cut a hole in it and tie a ribbon around the flowers and through the business card. If you sell gift baskets, Tuck one inside the basket before delivering it to your customer. The same goes for Mary Kay or Avon Cosmetics - place your card in the bag. You've seen how some restaurants staple a menu to their bags for takeout; if you use bags, staple your card to the outside of the bag.

9. Send a business card in every piece of correspondence - letters, invoices, even your electric bill. Sooner or later, those cards will be used.

10. If you are crafty, incorporate them into your designs: embellish them with rubber stamps, or blend them with other art projects. You can also mount them to greeting cards you create and send to customers and prospects.

11. When mailing out information: Take a number 10 envelope, facing you and upside down. Fold the envelope in thirds. When you turn it around, there is a little pocket to tuck your card in. Include it in the mailing. Using a colored envelope makes the presentation even more dramatic.

12. Scan your card in and use it as a graphic for when you exchange links with other websites. The other site can use your graphic as the link.

13. Place them in library books as if you used them as bookmarks. Visit bookstores place them in books related

to your business.

Keeping Them Handy:

14. Use them as bookmarks so you'll always have some readily available if you meet someone at school, in the library, on the bus, or at the park where you like to read.

15. Have your spouse, family, and friends carry some of your cards with them in case they meet someone who might be interested in your product or service.

16. Wear them! Use them as nametags at meetings and conferences instead of the "Hello, my name is ..." type of tags.

17. Keep a stack of cards everywhere you might need them - in your car, your jacket pocket, your briefcase, your purse or wallet, in your planner, at home, anywhere you can think of. Then you'll always have some on hand when you meet a prospect.

When to Use Them:

18. Give them out during your personal meetings when you meet someone new: at your church, your children's soccer games, at lunch with your friends when someone brings a guest. To be more polite, you could have a personal "calling card" printed up with your information to use in these situations.

19. If you do seminars, have your participants exchange cards with each other. Have them write a compliment about the person on the back before they hand them out. Everyone will have a wealth of contacts; they will remember each other and it will also give participants a boost of confidence.

20. Ask neighborhood businesses if you may display your cards near their registers.

21. Tack them to bulletin boards at supermarkets, restaurants, retail stores and the library - anyplace that has a bulletin board.

22. Give out two cards at a time - one for your prospect or client, and one for her/him to give away.

23. Place some on the table when you leave a restaurant.

24. Agree to mail the cards of other businesspeople in the mailings you do, if they will do the same for you. Your networking circle will grow as your cards are passed around.

How Not to Use Business Cards:

25. Don't give them to a member of the opposite sex in the hopes that s/he will call you. I have a friend who was told this wouldn't work. He did an experiment for six months to prove it, and his friend was right! Sadly, not one woman called him. Although he does have a girlfriend now!

26. Some people don't give out business cards when they meet a prospective client. Instead, they send a follow-up note later with their card enclosed.

Other Types of Business Cards to Have

27. Business card CD-ROM. If you haven't seen these yet, they are a mini-sized CD that plays in any CD player and has your contact information on it, as well as an introduction to your business.

28. Email Signature. Put your contact information into a signature file for email, along with a link to your website (be sure to include the "http" in order to make it "clickable.")

29. Vcard. These are electronic business cards that recipients can click on and automatically add to their address books. Do a web search for "vcard" to find software that supports this technology. Then use it in all your emails!

30. One consulting company, which works with designers of products for people with disabilities, prints their cards in Braille. It reminds their clients how they can help them comply with disability laws. It also gets people asking for information.

Linda Elizabeth Alexander is a business writer and marketing consultant specializing in web content and sales copy. Be heard and understood! Subscribe to Write to the Point, a FREE ezine for business people who want to learn how to write better.

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