

# When it Comes to Business Cards, Vive la France!

By Shannon Cherry, APR

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Don't let the small size fool you. A business card is one of the least expensive and most powerful forms of advertising you possess. Your business card is your introduction to potential clients. It's your opportunity to make an impression with every person you come in contact with.

You will most likely need to order 500 or 1000 cards (1000 is much cheaper per card). But what are you supposed to do with 1000 cards?

Business cards don't have to sit on a shelf collecting dust. I suggest taking a page from the French. When I was in Paris, every business had - and used - business cards. Even the restaurants and bars used them effectively: wait staff presented a business card either with the check or directly to the diners after the check was paid. It's a simple, effective technique that works because everyone takes them.

Use the same idea for yourself. Think of your business card as a mini billboard for your company; you need it to be seen to make an impact. Depending on the type of business, there are several ways to showcase your card. You never know who is going to pick it up and call you, or give it to a friend.

Widely-used services can distribute their cards in everyday places. For example, my sister, who runs a manicure business, often puts business cards in places where the general public might easily see and pick up her card. She hands out her cards like confetti. She places them on bulletin boards in stores and fast food shops, inside magazines at doctors' offices and on the sink in restrooms. She also has a bulletin board in her salon and encourages customers to post their cards, in return for passing out her cards to others.

This last idea can be used, with a variation, for any business. When handing out business cards to an individual, give out three at a time, asking them to distribute them to others they may think might be interested in your business. Do the same in return.

Keep business cards within hands reach. You should place some in your briefcase, purse, pocket, and on the front desk or reception area of your business. With cards readily available, you'll always be able to introduce yourself with them.

Hand your card to the receptionist at the doctor's office, the hostess at the restaurant, or the technician at the auto repair shop. Include your card with all correspondence, including letters and

thank you notes to customers, potential customers and business associates. And don't forget including one in all your bills. Someone is opening your bills, and you never know who that someone may be.

When you hand out your card, it's important that you make it memorable. Write a brief message on it before handing it to someone: your extension number or direct phone line, "Ask for me personally," "Best wishes!" or "Thanks!" all work well.

Make your business card do double duty - and point it out to the person you're giving it to. Print a coupon or special offer on the backs of your cards. Also include these special cards with invoices to current customers. If you offer a referral incentive, print it on the card.

It's all in thinking outside the box when it comes to the box of cards sitting in a desk drawer. The French don't use the hard-sell like Americans do, but they realize 'Le Card' is the quickest way to turn a brief encounter into a long-term customer.

About the author:

Shannon Cherry, APR helps businesses and nonprofit organizations to be heard. She's a marketing communications and public relations expert with more than 15 years experience and the owner of Cherry Communications. For more tips and tricks - or information about her services, visit <http://www.cherrycommunications.com> . Contact her at <mailto:shannon@cherrycommunications.com>. Copyright 2003, Cherry Communications. All rights reserved.

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