

Business Card Basics

He rummaged in his pocket and pulled out a wad of papers. He shuffled through the pile of receipts, 20 dollar bills, and various business cards. He finally found what he was looking for and handed me his card, with bent, worn edges, as he jammed the remaining wad back into his pocket.

Giving someone your card can seem like a simple task, but how it is done can have a serious impact on how your business is perceived—and whether that card is safely filed away or tossed in the wastepaper basket. Your business card is a miniature representation of your business: your style, your focus, your unique selling proposition.

-Treat your cards with respect! Keep them stored safely in a business card case. Cards will become worn and bent when kept in pockets or wallets.

-Keep your card separate from others you receive. If you are at a networking event, keep your cards in your right pocket and the ones you receive in your left. You want to be able to effortlessly take out one of your cards. For women, always keep in the same section of your purse.

-Treat others' cards with respect, as well. If a business card is a representation of a person's company; you don't want to defile it. Ask for permission before jotting a note on the back. Never fold or bend the card.

How to exchange business cards

1. Unless someone is expressing interest in your business, do not shove a card into their hand. First, ask for their card.
2. Thank the person as you take their card.
3. Take a moment to look at the card and comment on it or ask a question related to what you see on it.
4. Put their card away in a secure place.
5. Offer them your card by handing it to them with the text facing them. Don't make them turn it around to read it.
6. Don't give them numerous cards unless they ask. They are not automatically your sales team just because you were introduced.
7. Make sure you don't abruptly end the conversation now that you have 'done the deed'. Remember, networking is about building relationships. Even if they aren't your ideal customer, they may know someone who is.

Business card organizing tips

- Have a basket that you put newly received business cards in. This is your "to be processed" inbox.
- Send follow-up emails to those people you have met.
- Transfer the cards into your database, electronic address book, or business card book.
- Use categories or groups to help you find these individuals later. Put information on where and when you met and any other information you can recall about this person. Some sample categories:
 - o Leads
 - o Services
 - o Customers

- Event where you met them
- Competition
- Industry
- Networking

What do you do with all those cards? They aren't trophies; you only want the information they contain. After the information has been entered in your electronic files, toss the paper card. If you use a business card book, routinely go through a weed out cards that are out-of-date or of no use to you. Be generous and pass along cards to colleagues who might be interested in the information.

Practice these business card basics and you will be better at your business.

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