

How to make yours the most profitable business card in town

For years and years highly paid business gurus have been coming over from the USA telling us that our single most important marketing tools - our business cards - are, to put it politely, rubbish. You've probably been at one of their seminars when they ask everyone to hold up a business card... and then proceed to tell you why they are all pathetic.

And, even more annoyingly, they were probably right!

As a nation we've been using cards for hundreds of years. Initially as personal calling cards, and more recently as business tools. But over all of those years the "card" has been exactly that - a 2" by 3" piece of card. While every other aspect of marketing has been transformed beyond belief, the business card has trundled along as a small, rectangular piece of cardboard.

So, in this Insider Report we are going to explain how you can give your business a major competitive advantage by using business cards that even the most cynical American business guru would be proud of.

Getting the basics right

To get you in the mood, here's a summary of the main messages we've heard from all those American gurus over the years:

- 1 Starting with the blindingly obvious.... make sure your business cards are up to date, colourful, stylish, accurate, legible without a magnifying glass, pleasing to touch and don't look as if they have been crumpled up in a wallet for months. Many of the cards that we see fail at least one of these tests - and some fail all of them!
- 2 Use both sides of the card - You are paying for both sides, so use them both and double the impact of your card. For example, use the back for a map or a description of what makes you so special.
- 3 Include a strong message that raises the reader's curiosity and promises a benefit if they contact you (eg "Use this card to claim a *Business Builder* session to help your business become more successful and profitable. It's worth £500 - but is yours free as our gift if you present this card to us in the next seven days")
- 4 Who should have a business card? The simple answer is everybody in your organisation - or as one very successful businessman said recently 'everybody from the receptionist *downwards!*' The fact that your competitors are not giving their receptionists business cards is exactly why you should give them to your entire team. Not only will they raise team morale and present a professional impression, but from time to time they will actually bring you sales leads.

So far, so familiar? Well, you'd be amazed at how many businesses have heard these messages before... and yet have completely failed to do anything with them! Be honest now, how well do you score?

Something a little different

Now you've started thinking about your business card, read on and discover how other businesses are beating the Americans at their own game by making their business cards really memorable:

- One firm of consultants have turned their card into an eight-sided mini folding brochure that combined practical tips ('How to avoid the 12 biggest mistakes most small businesses make') with a benefit-packed sales pitch.
- Another approach is to turn your card into something that people can trade for a freebie (eg "Present this card and we'll give you a one hour consultation worth £150, completely free of charge") or for a discount (eg "Present this card to us before 30 September 1998 and I'll give you a 10% discount on your first order")
- How about encouraging people to keep your card by, for example, including handy reference information (such as other useful phone numbers) and making it self adhesive so that it can be stuck onto a PC, file or telephone?
- Include a photograph of yourself - after all, "you" is really all you have to sell
- Use "stretch titles" - ie "accounts executive" instead of "accounts clerk" or "area director" instead of "salesman", since this will make it much easier for your people to be taken seriously
- Make it easier for your contacts to transfer your details to their diaries and address books by including a couple of small sticky labels on your card
- And, if you're ever caught in one of those embarrassing moments when someone asks for your card, but you don't have one to give them, why not try responding with: "I'm glad you asked for a card since we have the world's first three dimensional business card... it's me... when would you like me to deliver myself?!"

We could go on to list the dozens of other superb *tactical* improvements that we have seen innovative businesses make to their business cards. But, since space is limited, instead we are going to focus on two *strategic* ideas that will help you to use business cards to win many, many more customers.

The first of these two ideas is so important that it amazes us that we have never seen it in a single marketing book. It's this.... the true measure of success in the business card game is categorically *not* the number of cards you hand out.... it is the number of cards that you collect.

Think about it for a minute.

At best, only 10% of the people you give a card to will ever contact you again. Whereas you can systemically contact 100% of the people you collect cards from. So, other things being equal, you'll get ten times as much new work from collecting cards as you will from handing them out... providing, of course, that you are committed to systematically following up every card you collect (and if you're not committed to doing this, shame on you! These are the warmest leads you'll ever get.... So to waste them is sheer folly!)

And now for the amazing!

Having said that collecting cards is more important than handing them out, you are still going to have to hand out a card in order to get one in return. So the second most important thing you can

do is to make your card so distinctive that it makes the other person think “Wow, that’s amazing!”

Impossible? Not at all. Let us tell you how one business is already doing it.

Imagine a business card that contains thousands of words of powerful sales messages.

Imagine a business card that uses the name of the person you are giving it to - and includes masses of information that is uniquely relevant and of interest to that person.

Imagine a business card that includes testimonials and endorsements from delighted customers.

Imagine a business card that adds value by including ideas and advice that help your contacts to solve their problems.

Imagine a business card so impressive that your contacts actually want to show it to their contacts.

And, perhaps best of all, imagine a business card that will never cost you a single penny in printers’ fees!

It sounds too good to be true, doesn’t it? But one business card we have seen does all of that, and much, much more. How? Well, by paradigm shifting. The paradigm for more than 200 years has been that cards need to be printed on small rectangular pieces of cardboard. But why? Why not use a different medium instead? For example, why not use a floppy disk to produce an *interactive* business card?

Ridiculous? Not at all, because that’s exactly what the Interactive Business Card Company does... and their customers love them for it. It’s difficult to explain exactly how it works here. But we promise you it really does work... brilliantly well.... for businesses of all types up and down the country.

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