

Your Trusty Business Card

By Dawn Stanyon, Professional Image Consultant, © 2012 The Emily Post Institute, Inc.

With social media and technology-device networking at the forefront, why are business cards still in use today? Because they continue to be easy to use, inexpensive to print, and effective. For every 2,000 business cards distributed, a company's sales increase 2.5 percent. However, 90 percent of business card recipients will toss them within one week. (Source: thedesigninspiration.com)

A good business card:

- Invites a professional acquaintance to get in touch with you.
- Should represent your company's brand (and perhaps your personal brand).
- Defines your position and responsibilities (e.g., Vice-President, Sales).
- Provides a number of ways to reach you: mailing address, telephone, cell phone, fax, email address, website, social media site(s).

A businessperson should never be without at least a few cards, and the newer-looking they are, the better. You never know when you might need a card (at a dinner in a restaurant, say, or sitting next to someone in a baseball stadium's bleachers), and they should be in perfect condition when you present them. Stationery, specialty, and department stores sell business card cases that prevent smudging and creasing.

How to hand out business cards, and to whom?

- If you're reasonably sure you'll be dealing with someone in the future, ask for a business card ("May I have your business card, please? I'd like to connect with you again.") and give yours in return. Probably the one exception is when you encounter a top executive who clearly outranks you. If such a senior person wants your card, or wants you to have hers, she will tell you so.
- When given a card, don't just snatch it and jam it into your back pocket. A safe standard is to accept it with both hands, holding it by your fingertips. Take a moment to look at it, perhaps complimenting its design. Then slip it into your wallet, card case, or date book.
- Offer cards one at a time, rather than presenting a fistful, as if you were trying to flood the market with the wonder of you and your title.
- Offering your card privately to someone at a social event is perfectly fine, but hold off on detailed business talk until another day. Don't pop out your card in the middle of a dinner that has nothing to do with business; if you want to present one, wait until you've left the table.