



Developing Effective Marketing Materials: Business Card Design Considerations

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Introduction

A business card is the most basic marketing tool every business must have. It provides a convenient, relatively inexpensive method to promote your business to everyone you meet everywhere you go. However, too often the business card is under-appreciated and little thought or time is devoted to designing this essential communication tool.

Business cards should be treated no different than any other piece of marketing material. It should function as the work-horse of your marketing arsenal, consistently driving customers to your door. Think of the business card as a mini-advertisement instead of a basic white card with your contact information on the front of it.

If your business card is being distributed only to be safely tucked away in someone's wallet never to see daylight again, then your business card was not designed effectively and should be re-examined for ways to improve its functionality.

Components of a Business Card

When designing your business card, start by evaluating what basic information you want to include such as:

- Logo
- Tagline
- Business Name
- Individual Name(s)
- Job Title(s)
- Address
- Telephone Number(s)
- E-mail Address
- Website Address

While it seems like common sense to include such fundamental information as your name, address, telephone number and e-mail, many times cards are thrown together too quickly and some important detail is overlooked or forgotten. Let's examine a few of these a little closer.

Business Logo

A logo serves as a visual element used by a business on all of its marketing materials that people can look at and instantly recognize. It is even more effective if the logo somehow reflects what you do or symbolizes something unique about your company. A simple symbol or graphic image using your business name is nice because it does not clutter up space with a direct message and it is highly adaptable to many different uses. Too often people use intricate illustrations for their logos. While this looks appealing on the computer and maybe even paper, how will it look when you want to embroider a t-shirt

or shrink it to fit on a business card? Another way to look at this is if you cannot draw the image with a broad-tip marker then it is not a good logo.

Taglines

Ideally your business name or logo should indicate what you do. If it doesn't then you should consider a tagline. A tagline is a descriptor of your business, usually in seven words or less. It is one of those things that looks simple to develop but often isn't. It needs to be unique, relevant, memorable, and elicit an emotional response, which is why writing a great tagline is so difficult. When developing a tagline think in terms of what makes your company different and valuable and list those words that best convey such concepts.

Business Name

What's in a name? A lot, when it comes to small business. New enterprises should put as much effort into naming your business as you did into coming up with your idea or writing your business plan. Ideally, your name should convey the value and uniqueness of the product or service you've developed. In agriculture, it is common practice to name your business after your farm or family. The question to ask is, "does my business name effectively depict a clear picture of what I do to a potential consumer." For example if you are considering naming your business Brown's Farm, would potential customers know that you were a Christmas tree grower by looking at your business name alone? If you are an existing business with a name that does not convey what you do, then you will want to clarify this by using an effective logo or tagline.

Address

Always include an address on your business card, even if working from home. It adds credibility and makes your business appear established. When placing an address on a business card, first consider the cards' general function to support your business and who will be the primary target audience. This is especially important if you have different addresses for your physical business location and receiving mail. If your operation takes place at several locations such as multiple farmers markets, and you generally do not sell on the farm then you might want to use your mailing address since the card will likely be used primarily for communication purposes. However, if you have an on-farm market or agritourism venue, then the physical address is preferred so that customers can find your operation. It is also perfectly acceptable to use both addresses, however, be careful not to clutter the card with too much information.

Telephone Number(s)

Today it is not uncommon for a business to utilize a variety of telephone numbers with the addition of toll free numbers, fax machines, cellular phones, and Internet services such as Skype and Vonage. It is essential you include at least one telephone number on your business card. Should you decide to include multiple numbers on the card then they should be listed in order of establishment such as main land line first, fax machine second and cellular third. It is also noteworthy to mention the importance of including area codes and extensions when applicable. Keep in mind your customer might be new to the area or live in a location which utilizes multiple area codes. Failure to include the full ten digit number could result in a loss of sale if your customer is unable to reach you.

E-mail Address

E-mail addresses are often overlooked as an opportunity to brand your business. Instead of using a generic e-mail address such as "yourname@yahoo.com" or "yourfarm@comcast.net," invest in an e-mail address that complements the domain name of your website. For example, if your website address is www.berryfarm.com, then a good e-mail address might be "yourname@berryfarm.com." Today's technology makes e-mail personalization inexpensive and easy to set up, enabling you to further business credibility and professionalism. If you are unable to personalize your e-mail at this time, make sure the e-

mail address you are using on your card represents your business in its best light. Simply put, avoid using cute and kitschy addresses such as “proudmom24@free-email.com” or “crazygoatlady@freemail.com,” which may seem harmless and are fine for your personal life but come across very unprofessional.

Website Address

A website is a must in today’s business world, even if it’s a simple, one-page site that provides only basic contact information, it should be thought of as your on-line business card. A website provides potential and existing customers easy 24-hour access to learn more about your business, the products you sell and the services you offer. Your website address should be included on every marketing material you develop, and your business card is no exception.

Layout and Design Considerations

While contact information is essential it does not need to be the only information you include on the card. Remember, your business card should really be thought of as a mini advertisement. When designing an ad for the newspaper, what additional information might you consider including that you would not generally think of adding to a business card? The use of color, photos, graphics or a unique layout will help your business card stand out. Including a bulleted list of your products or services is also useful. Remember space is limited so maximize the cards impact by using both sides.

Lastly, consider how to make the card will work for you beyond its traditional purpose. Give your customers a reason to hold on to your card and not file it away never to be seen again. Include a discount offer such as a coupon on the back, which can be redeemed at their next purchase. Implement a rewards program. Mark the card each time a purchase is made and after your customer makes a certain number of purchases then reward them with a discount or free gift. Remember to replace the card with a new one each time the customer redeems their old one.

Below is an example of a business card that is working as a multifunctional marketing tool:



Sample Business Card Front

Bushels of Fun For the Family!

You-Pick Orchard • Apple Blossom Market • Special Events
Fresh Baked Goods • Unique Gift Shop • School Tours

You are One Good Apple...

Receive a \$10 gift certificate towards a \$25 purchase
after 6 (six) purchases of \$25 or more.



Sample Business Card Back

Summary

Business cards are undoubtedly one of the best ways to promote your company's products or services. The most effective business cards serve as a multi-functional marketing tool. It will incorporate not only basic contact information but also use strategies to make the business card work as a mini-advertisement or promotion.

References:

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