

Quick, name the single marketing item most widely used by businesses of all sizes. Did you answer business cards? With business cards we first begin to make an impression on the people who will eventually be our customers. Our business cards establish an image for our organization. If this makes a business card sound like a wonderful marketing tool, that's because it is! By using some creativity and a bit of unconventional thinking, you can proudly present a business card that both stands out and really markets you and your company.

The first decision: SIZE - A standard American business card measures 3.5 x 2 inches. This size fits conveniently into business card holders and can be stored easily in a card binder, rotary file or wallet. Although using a non-standard size may tempt you as a way to present a memorable business card, do remember that your ultimate goal is to have the recipient store and later retrieve your business card. A standard size will accomplish this objective.

The second decision: INFORMATION TO INCLUDE - Since the ultimate purpose of a business card is to provide information about who you are and how you may be contacted, the basic information to include on your business card is the name and address of your company, your name and title, your phone and FAX numbers and your e-mail address. You may also wish to include aids to help others remember your name, such as a phonetic spelling or a nickname in parentheses. When important for image, consider adding your professional or academic designations and affiliations. In today's world of wireless communications, you may find that your company's toll-free phone number, your direct phone line, your cell phone number, your pager number and your fax number may not all fit on the business card. Be prepared to decide which of these options are most likely to lead to success for the person who wants to contact you, and omit the others.

The third decision: A LOGO - A logo can be created using art elements such as clip art, typefaces, photos, symbols, silhouettes, shapes and outlines, or a logo can be designed from scratch. The purpose of a logo is to visually convey attributes of your business. These might include what the business does or what characteristics it has. A painting business, for example, could use a paint bucket and brush to demonstrate its trade, while a bank might select strong, bold type to convey security and stability. Developing a logo begins with deciding what words best convey the attributes of the business, then selecting visual images that evoke the words. This may take a brainstorming session or two,

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especially if you want to avoid ideas being used by others or visual images that have become dated or stale.

The fourth decision: DESIGN- Good design communicates an idea and equally considers function and form. Good design is visually striking and conveys an impression. Good design separates your business card from others and provides a WOW factor as you hand your card to another person. When designing a business card, the most important elements are proximity, alignment and contrast. Using the principle of proximity means that related items appear physically close to each other, giving the reader a visual clue about the organization of the business card. Thus, information related to the



company (address, toll free phone line, FAX, web address) should be grouped and proximate, while information about the individual (direct phone line, e-mail address) should be grouped and not in close proximity to the company information. Following the principle of alignment, nothing is placed on the business card arbitrarily, and every item has a visual connection with something else.

Alignment can be achieved by building the design on a grid. Contrast adds visual interest to a business card and also creates organizational hierarchy. But for contrast to be effective, it must be definite. Two elements that are only a bit different don't contrast, they conflict. True contrast is bold and obvious - a thin line with a thick line; large type with small type; a script font with a bold sans serif; light and dark ink colors.

The fifth decision: COLOR - Introduce color into your business card with paper, ink or both. The psychology of color is a topic in itself; here is a brief summary: Warm colors (red, orange, yellow, brown) evoke danger, power, passion, strength, blood and war. When used as an accent, warm colors can stimulate people to make quick decisions. Cool colors (green, blue, purple) signify nature, life, new growth, energy, faith, money, royalty, richness, power and sensitivity. Blue is deemed therapeutic to the mind and body. The color white connotes purity, clarity and cleanliness. Notice that all the colors are associated with words. Use this information to select colors that elicit the emotional response consistent with the visual image of your logo. The combination of logo, design and color will create the truly unique business card you desire.

