



BEST PRACTICES TO CREATE YOUR BEST BUSINESS CARD.

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Businesses and individuals have always used marketing collateral, in one form or another, to increase awareness of their experience and standing within their industry. One of the most common methods to do so is with one of the most long-lived marketing tactics still in practice: the business card.

However, it's very important to remember that there are many considerations to take as you select your design elements. Not all business cards are created equal, and you will definitely want yours to help you stand out from your competition, instead of blending in. Fortunately, we now have access to many options that can give a business card that “wow” factor to make it memorable.

Nevertheless, you must also make sure that the options you select will fit in with the rest of your business persona, marketing strategy, and brand design.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BUSINESS CARD

(AND WHY THEY'RE NOW THE STANDARD)

Some of the earliest known uses of a practice that is very similar to the sharing of business cards date back to 15th century China. Members of the social elite would carry “visiting cards” as they appeared at each other’s homes, their reason for visiting written on them. This allowed both parties to be informed of the intended purpose of the visit, permitting a more open, honest, and strategically carried-out meeting.

A similar practice appeared in France during the 17th century, in the form of *visite billets*. Royals and members of the aristocracy carried cards to have the host’s servants announce the arrival of visitors. This practice gradually spread down to the upper and middle classes and became an intrinsic part of social etiquette. Before the century ended,



merchants were using the idea to create “trade cards,” which were closest to what we would recognize as a business card today.

These trade cards ultimately advertised services, acting as one of the first debit cards by allowing a record of the holder’s debt to be maintained, and could even provide rudimentary maps to the business’ location. Finally, the concept of visiting cards and trade cards merged during the Industrial Revolution to become the business cards we are familiar with today. Once this happened, the practice spread.

WHY YOU **STILL NEED** A BUSINESS CARD TO CARRY

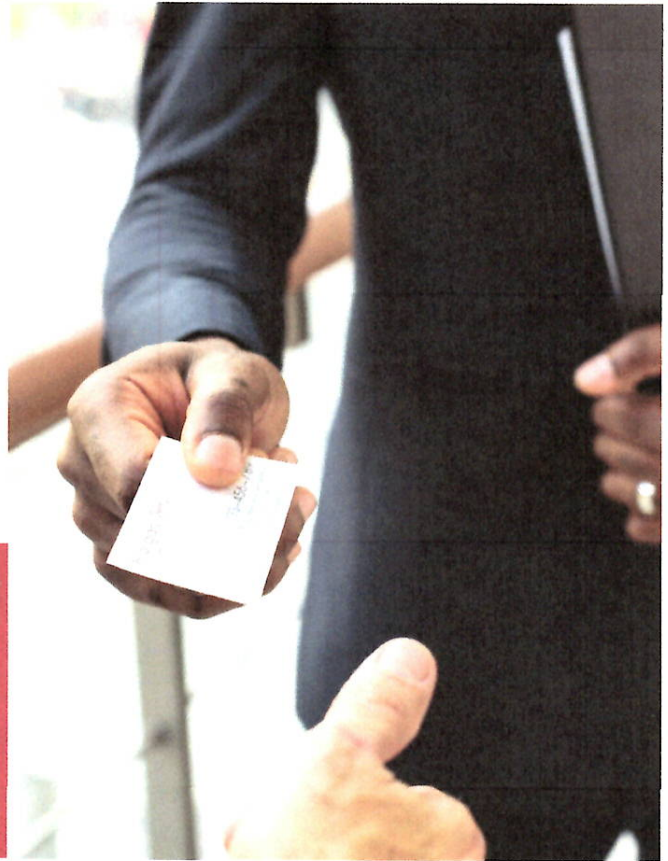
Admittedly, the invention of the Internet took a bit of wind out of the sails for the original purpose of business cards. Now that business associates can link up via LinkedIn, network via Facebook, and keep in touch on Twitter, there's little need for a bit of paper describing your services to be produced, in terms of impressions. After all, a quick web search should be able to pull up any information your business card ever could.

However, there is a benefit that a web search can't provide, but a physical card can, making it a considerable force to any marketing efforts.

Simply put, you can't carry a ready-to-view website around with you at all times and hand it out to people. That just isn't how they work. However, it is much easier to carry around and distribute a card with the information someone needs at the moment, as well as the means to reach out and get more information from you and your website later. Again, once your target navigates away from your website, it's up to them to return and experience more marketing touches.

Unfortunately, there's a lot of truth to the old adage, "out of sight, out of mind," meaning that once they've navigated away from your website, you may have to work hard to regain your spot in your target's consciousness. On the other hand, imagine if that same contact had one of your cards tucked away in their wallet, getting a peek (and impression) every time they open it—not to mention the pieces of content that a business card can get you the authorization to send to your potential client as additional marketing materials.

There is a catch, though. In order for any of this to happen, you have to be sure you talk up your company as you offer your carefully designed card to any takers. After all, there are a lot of business cards out there. To improve your chances of making an impact, you have to make sure your card stands out.



TO BE AN **ATTENTION GRABBER**, YOU HAVE TO **GRAB THE** **ATTENTION!**

Seriously—consider all of the business cards you have ever encountered. Would yours be particularly memorable out of all of them? More importantly, would a stranger to both your brand and the brand on a competing card be swayed by your business card to reach out to you before utilizing the alternative option? In order to accomplish this, there are a few steps you will have to take.

First off, you'll need to ensure that your card makes you somewhat memorable. After all, consider the business cards you've collected—how many of the names do you remember the face to? In short, your card (and by extension, you) can't afford to be forgettable. Fortunately, there are many methods to not being forgettable.

Maybe some
biz card
stats
or travel

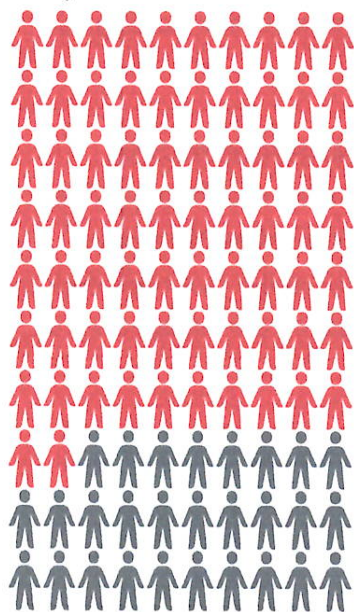
You have to be sure that your business card doesn't sacrifice its purpose as it avoids being forgettable, as well. It still has to accurately and succinctly depict your services, your strengths, your business in general. Furthermore, you have to consider what you and its recipient will have to do with it. A gaudy, oversized, or otherwise overdone card will not be practical or portable for either of you.

In order to hit that happy medium between peacocking and practicality, you will need to take particular design and content considerations into account. First and foremost, you'll need to establish who you want to attract as an audience, what their preferences are, and how you want to be perceived based on those preferences.

There is a scene in the film *American Psycho* that does an exemplary job of going into (maybe a little too much) detail regarding the design decisions a business card will require. However, the lesson doesn't end there. In that scene, everyone's card was of an exceptionally similar design, with minor details resulting in major perceived differences. However, since all of the cards in the video were meant to be impressive to the same audience, to project a particular impression, it stands to reason that they would all be of a particular design.

This practice can serve as a double-edged sword: while your audience will have certain expectations for your business card design, you don't want to conform to the point that there's nothing unique or valuable to make you stand out. Keeping that balance between "too similar" and "too out there" is key to establishing what you intend to establish—but how do you do so?

Well, we've searched for different ideas and accepted best practices for creating your own business card, and now we'd like to share them with you.



**ACCORDING TO A REPORT FROM
STATISTIC BRAIN RESEARCH'
INSTITUTE, 72% OF PEOPLE
JUDGE A COMPANY OR A PERSON
BASED ON THE QUALITY OF THEIR
BUSINESS CARDS.**

Bold.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS TO DESIGNING AND DEVELOPING YOUR BUSINESS CARD

Consideration 1: Material and Shape *Cedric*

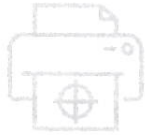
Okay, before you start thinking that all business cards are the same, you should know that from a design standpoint, they come in five different varieties.

1. **Basic** - Unsurprisingly, this is the plain, traditionally styled business card. Simple, with little decor beyond the information printed on them, these cards provide nothing but unadulterated information with minimal distractions.
2. **Picture** - Equally unsurprisingly, a picture business card features an image that somehow relates to the business. It may be a picture of you (or whoever's contact information is on the card in question), the business or its logo, or something that represents your services. This helps to add a little more engagement when the card is viewed and can provide a strong reminder of the sort of thing you offer.
3. **Tactile** - These are cards that have been given a particular texture, either through changes made to the card itself, like alterations to its shape, or the use of unusual materials, such as metal, wood, or fabric.
4. **Multipurpose** - Multipurpose cards are those that offer some utility beyond providing basic contact information. This can often be seen in the appointment cards that are given out by physicians to their patients at the end of the appointment. Loyalty cards are another variety of these cards as well.
5. **Outside-the-Box** - These are cards that have a little extra "oomph" put into their "wow" factor, or are different enough from other cards that they may not even be immediately classified as "cards." as they can also serve as coasters, rulers, or even a chocolatey snack.

Depending on which approach you take with your business cards, you will want to make different decisions concerning the rest of its makeup and design.

Assuming for a moment that you select a more traditional paper business card, you have many more decisions to make. What weight of cardstock will you utilize? Will it have a specific texture to it, or will it be smooth? Will it be made of paper at all? A welder may consider opting for some other material, such as finely stamped metal, and a computer firm may elect to utilize a plastic card that is similar to a component one might find in a computer. The material you choose to use can help to add to the card's impact and the impression it makes—but more on this later.

Don't forget, when you select your material, to consider how thick your resulting card will be. Common opinion tends to assert that the thicker the card, the more assertive and valuable it will appear to be, and the thinner the card, the cheaper it seems. If you can, it is better to invest in a higher-quality material—after all, this is how you are going to represent yourself.



Consideration 2: Content

Curker

Naturally, the typical business card has relatively very little real estate to share your information upon. This gives the decision of which information to share a little more weight as you deliberate, as you want to select enough information to attract a prospect to contact you, but you don't want to overstuff and over-complicate the card's appearance. What should you include?

- **Company name and logo** - Naturally, you'll want your business card to direct back to your business in every appropriate way. Incorporating some of the most recognizable components of your branding is a great foundation for doing this.
- **Cardholder's name** - Again, you'll want to include the name of whoever will be distributing the card to be on it. This will help to simplify networking and direct a visitor to the business towards the resource who can help them the best.
- **Contact information** - Of course, any good marketing strategy wouldn't rely on the prospect or target to begin their interaction by visiting you in person. Instead, you will want to provide your contact with every chance to interact with you with less effort required from either party. However, make sure that you are selective in what contact information you include.

As we mentioned before, take the available space on the card into account. As helpful as it might seem to provide each and every single way to contact you on your business card, doing so could easily be counter productive. Instead, it's better to stick to the means of contact that are more commonly used. For instance, your telephone number and email address. This brings up another important point: you need to be doubly selective in selecting an email account to share on your business card.

Remember, your business card is a professional document that enables a potentially valuable business associate or opportunity to make contact with you. This means that it is almost always best to put your most professional foot forward. Keeping this in mind, wouldn't you agree that name@company.com is a better email address to use than LadiezMan651@genericwebmail.com? A business card's job is to represent you, so don't sabotage your own advancement.

Finally, depending on where and to whom you will be offering your card, you may consider including information on a particular service you offer or even a special offer to those holding the card—if not both. By providing a brief blurb about a service, you could offer a small discount to anyone who presents their card as they sign on for that service, encouraging them to keep your card handy (where it will make more impressions) and to establish contact with you.

Consideration 3: Design

— *Check Content*

Design is a crucial element to a business card's effectiveness. After all, a haphazardly designed card will generate a much different impression than a carefully thought-out and designed one will. However, the constraints that the business card platform presents are not to be ignored as these designs are created.

One of the most important rules to follow in business card design is the infamous KISS rule. Due to the small amount of real estate available on the card, you will have to be selective about what you include on it, as mentioned before. Second-guess every decision you make: do you really need more than one email address on your card? Are any of the titles you have listed on it redundant, or less impressive than the others? Keeping your content concise will be key to creating a card that encourages quick comprehension.

This selectivity is due to the tendency for a cluttered card to be disregarded. A proper ratio of 'white' space (or whichever color your card ultimately is) to text is almost equally important as what the text says. Using other elements, like QR code links, to share additional information can be an effective way to tell the card recipient a little more about yourself without cramming it all onto the physical card. With functionality like this, you can also go into a little more detail about yourself, your organization, and your solutions.

As you consider how your card will be designed, try to experiment with some of the different materials, finishes, and cuts that were mentioned earlier as well. Would your card (and its message) be more effective with a particular texture? Does a certain design style fit your company image better than others? Would a special cut or finish provide emphasis to your message? Or, would any of these additions detract from your card's ability to put its message across?

It is also crucial to remember that a business card provides two sides, although one is usually reserved for a more aesthetic feature. Whether it's a pattern, a pertinent image, your logo, or even your portrait, don't forget to utilize all the space you have.

Remember, your business card should in some way appeal to the audience you are trying to distribute them to. If you are trying to target a particular audience, designing your card to combine your personality and industry with their inherent preferences could help you to distribute your cards to the audience that will receive the greatest impression from them: your target audience.

Consideration 4: Your Audience and Your Company Culture

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As you come to the end of your design process, you need to take a final look at your design to determine if your business cards will resonate with the appropriate audience as well as send the message you are trying to send.

Are your company's values presented the way you want them to be perceived? This can be significantly altered by the slightest of design choices, so be sure to revisit and refine your card until it's just right. Did your design turn out to be appropriate for your intended audience, or is it too "unique," or even too "professional?"

Finally, it never hurts to reevaluate if the card is too cramped with content, making it difficult to read. While it may not seem that significant, a 'busy' card could very well turn off a promising target.

Consideration 5: Production and Price

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Finally, once you have your design squared away, you'll need to have your business cards printed for distribution. Do you have access to a producer who can create your card to meet the standards you expect it to meet? Before you submit it to them, you will want to complete another comprehensive review of your design, checking all measurements, colors, and text for errors. Missing an error could quickly become very costly, so review your design very carefully.

Make sure you also go over your finished product with a fine-toothed comb. If your printer has created a substandard product, you should insist that they remedy their mistakes before they are paid the full balance for the job.

Speaking of which, are your cards at an acceptable price point to produce? Ideally, each member of your team will have their own custom business card, so be sure to calculate your financial commitment accordingly.

However, when it comes to looking for value in a business card, more is generally more. The higher the cost to print a card, the higher the quality of the finished product. Furthermore, the more cards you produce, the more likely it is that you'll get your money's worth. Most of the cost of production will come from the printer's need to calibrate their machines to meet your needs, so they tend to provide more of a bargain as the number of cards goes up.

Fill with Quick Recap
- Example Cards
- Stats, or Facts

FINAL THOUGHTS

The most important thing to remember as you design your business card is that it is meant to represent you, just as the rest of your marketing should. However, this representative effect is particularly strong with a business card, as it will be influenced by the memory of receiving it, and vice versa: your contact will often remember you and their impression of you based on your card's quality. In this way, your business card will serve as your business' representative.

Therefore, as you design it, design it as though you were hiring a representative that will communicate eloquently with your audience. After all, you wouldn't put someone who misrepresents your company in front of your audience, so your business card shouldn't do so, either.

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✓ *Agree*