



Merchandising

► by Keith Evans

Business cards — don't leave home without them

Marketing success depends upon being remembered. But let's face it, many people you meet for the first time at a field day, conference or social gathering probably can't recall your name 30 minutes later. People like me often find the name has evaporated from their mind in 30 seconds or less. Business cards are the next best thing to a good memory for your potential customers.

Provide a service

Providing people with your business card is a service, not an imposition, as some people seem to think. Simply hand people your card at the end of your conversations, tell them you've enjoyed meeting them and invite them to stop by your place sometime. It is the friendly and sociable thing to do, and it's appreciated.

People keep and use business cards. I file important cards in a folding caddie that has a clear plastic pocket for each card. I can check through this small book-sized file to find the name or telephone number of someone I need to contact. The file contains the cards of business people I seldom call or those I may want to call later, when I have need of their product or service. What's more, I keep a stack of business cards in my desk from people I have met and may one day want to contact. I know others who use cards much the same way.

Someone once asked me why I didn't enter all the information from these cards into a computer file. For some people this might work, but not for me. The computer list wouldn't have the logos and other graphics that help identify the person or business I'm looking for. A computerized file is a valuable business tool, but you can't as easily carry it in your pocket or place it, as a reminder, on your desk or near the telephone.

Find your own design

The best way to get your business card designed is to hire a graphic artist. Second

best is to find other business cards with design features that appeal to you and use them to develop your card. Don't copy a card exactly, particularly if it belongs to one of your competitors. Your business card should be distinctive, as well as attractive. It should make a favorable impression, one that's renewed each time a business prospect looks at it.

Include all the basic information on your card — name, address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address and your business slogan. Whether or not you use a photograph depends upon your layout. Just don't overdo it. Business cards,

like good advertising, should be simple, attractive and easy to read. A cluttered design makes a negative impression.

Once you've made all these decisions, take your artwork and your ideas to a qualified printer. If you are not familiar with the printer's work, ask for samples. Many printers can take your rough ideas and turn them into an attractive finished product.

Avoid cheap image

With today's high-tech printing, the cards shouldn't be expensive. However, extras — like adding four-color printing, or even a single color — will boost the cost. Whatever you do, don't opt for a bargain basement job. You won't save that much money, and the cards will look cheap.

Also, insist on high-quality paper, at least 100-pound (lb.) or 150-lb. cover stock. Select simple type styles. The type

should be easy to read and should not call attention to itself. Most good printers produce business cards all the time and can help you make the right printing decisions.

Resist the temptation to cut costs by ordering only a few cards. The cost of printing is mainly in the design, typesetting, proofing and press setup. Whether you order 200 or 2,000 cards will have only a minor effect on the total price. If you don't expect changes in the basic information, order enough for several years.

If things change, print new business cards. Handwritten corrections on cards are distracting. What's more, you will be less likely to hand them out and will be tempted to apologize for the corrections.

Experienced computer operators with an artistic bent and a good printer can produce business cards. It takes a special computer program and paper stock; but for the breeder who uses only a few business cards, it might be cost-effective. One advantage is that cards can be printed as needed and changed any time.

Keep in circulation

When your new business cards arrive, start using them. Give them to bankers, livestock Extension specialists, feed dealers, 4-H and FFA leaders, and anyone else who deals with people who might be interested in the cattle you sell. Some businesses, such as sale barns or feed dealers, often have bulletin boards for business cards. Also, include your card with most of your correspondence — people tend to throw away letters and envelopes, but are more likely to save a business card.

Carry your cards with you, and keep a supply in the glove compartment of your car or pickup. In your office, place cards in a convenient holder available to visitors.

Keep those cards in circulation — don't leave home without them.



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