

Five Ways Your Business Card Can Hurt You

The seven square inches of your business card is your most important piece of business real estate. Before you say a word, people have made several judgements about your business solely on the basis of your business card. All of the items I discuss here create a negative impressions. Is your business card guilty of any of these?

An email address not at your domain. Your email address is like a business location. A storefront in the wrong part of town reduces foot traffic to a store. Similarly, an email address with a Yahoo, Google, or Microsoft Network suffix tells people your business is not a “real” one. You need your email address to coincide with your business name. If you haven’t taken the time to establish your own domain, **do it now.**

Co-Branding. Like the yahoo.com suffix on an email address, having an advertisement for another company on the back of your card tells prospective clients that you don’t care enough about your business to have had a professional business card created. And, if you don’t care enough about your business to do that, why should someone want to do business with you? Everyone has seen banners with a business name on it being dwarfed by the logo for the beer or soft drink company that supplied the banner. Is that the reaction you want to your business card?

Clip Art. Let me make a simple statement. Your business card should not have “clip art” on it. “Free” clip art abounds on the internet, and for business purposes it is worth exactly what you paid for it. A business card should create a good impression and be memorable. A clip art image that can be seen in several hundred different situations is not memorable and will not help people remember your business.

Flimsy Paper. The moment people take your card in hand, an impression is being formed about your business. Don’t let flimsy paper say the wrong things about you. Give your business card “the corner test.” Hold your card and flex a corner of the card with your index finger. You should feel resistance and hear a solid, snapping sound. Cheaper, thinner paper offers less resistance and makes a tinny sound. Although there is a specialist vocabulary devoted to the question of paper weight, all you need to know is that you want a paper that is 80 or 100 pound cover or in the 12-14 point range. You wouldn’t print your business card on regular printer paper, so don’t print it on something that is only marginally better.

Popular Fonts. If you are not a font aficionado and you can name the font used on your business card, you probably are using the wrong one. Comic Sans is not “cute,” Curlz is not “fun,” Papyrus is best left in Egypt, Times Roman was designed for use in a newspaper, and Ariel is a cheaper version of a once trend-setting font introduced in the 1960s. [Even the Microsoft website says that Ariel is an “imposter.”] Your business deserves its own font.