Business Card Marketing

A few days back I attended a “business card exchange” sponsored by my BNI group. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet and greet business people and learn more about them and to have a chance to tell them about my business. Great idea! But, in the course of my networking and looking at the many cards that I had collected, what I observed concerned me and this inspired me to make some comments about business cards and using them effectively for marketing.

In preparation for my writing on this topic I referred to some of my notes that I got from visiting with Karen Emanuelson, CEO of Reciprocate. Her company specializes in developing custom marketing strategies for their clients. I shared with her my experience and some of my concerns. She affirmed that “the practice of swapping business cards at networking events is a great way to make an introduction and to leave a lasting impression, but learning to use these cards effectively can increase the power of your network.” She shared some quick ideas about the process:

**Step 1:** Ask those you meet a simple question: “Do you have a card?” Chances are, they will offer you their card and ask for your card in return.

**Step 2:** Always have a supply of your business cards with you, whether attending a networking event or even a kids’ school function. You never know where you might meet someone who can increase the power of your networking.

**Step 3:** After the event or at the end of the day, review the cards you’ve collected. Jot notes on the back of the cards to remember key information about each person.

**Step 4:** Spend the next few days building your network by inviting each of your new contacts to connect with you on LinkedIn. Personalize the connection invitation with a note about your previous conversation and mention the event where you met.

**Step 5:** As your new network accepts your LinkedIn connection requests, be sure to send them each a quick email to thank them for joining your network.

Emanuelson continues, “after you have completed this process, store the physical cards, use a Rolodex or simply bind with a rubber band and a note indicating the date and location where you obtained the cards.” But then she said, “take your business card out and have a good look at it. What does it say about you?”

Your business card should do more than state your name and contact information. Your business card is a vital part of your marketing effort. For example, remember that first impressions are lasting impressions. Your card is your brand. Use “white space.” Don’t cram so much on your business card that everything runs together. A card that’s ugly, dirty, printed on perforated paper or has another company’s website on the back screams ‘unprofessional amateur’.

Effective business cards are: clean, creative, professionally printed, visually attractive, and two-sided (use the back for notes, appointments, or other important information about your company).

An effective business card contains accurate, powerful words which describe your business, products and services. It entices people; it doesn’t bore them. Your business card: reflects your business attitude
playful, trustworthy, competent; showcases your name, your company name, logo and tagline; serves as a mini billboard for your company, products or services; should include a “Call To Action”; and gives people a reason to hold on to your card.

Karen Emanuelson offers a free 10-Point Business Card check list on her company website at www.reciprocatelle.com in the tab labeled “social media and marketing insight”. It is worth checking out.

Dean L. Swanson
Southeast Minnesota SCORE
c/o Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce
220 South Broadway, Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55904
*Dean is a volunteer SCORE Mentor and District Director of SCORE Minnesota