

Tradeshow Tips ~ Business Cards—Don't Leave Home Without Them!

Think back to your childhood to how important 'cards' were—flash cards, report cards, baseball cards traded with fervor as if all the world depended on having just the right player frozen in time on a piece of cardboard. What about birthday cards and Valentine's Day cards or postcards sent from far-away and exotic places before we were old enough to travel to those places ourselves, or even able to find them on a map? Playing cards to help us while away rainy summer days and tarot cards to tell our future. It's all in the cards, they say.

As we travel through life, we are inundated with more and more cards to show our ever-increasing levels of responsibility: library cards, membership cards, drivers licenses, bank cards, credit cards. Since cards of one sort or another have been so important throughout the various stages of our lives, it stands to reason that they should be of paramount importance for those of us who have entered the business arena. Our cards, after all, speak for us when we're not there to speak for ourselves. They tell people who we are, where to find us, what we do, and more often than not, by their very appearance, how we do it.

As business people, our cards are indicative of how we do business. Have you ever met someone at a trade show or expo who handed you a dog-eared and dirty card retrieved from the back of their wallet or from an inside pocket in their jacket? What about a card that has had the phone numbers crossed off and corrected in ink? Have you ever received a card and still had no idea what the person did?

I've also been in situations way too many times when I have asked someone for their card and they weren't carrying it. I've even had people ask me for MY card so they could write THEIR contact information on it and give it back to me! I'm not talking about someone out walking their dog, I'm talking about at a recent networking event or a recent expo. How can they NOT have their card on them at such a time? Are they there for business or what? I just don't get it.

I make sure I have my business cards with me at ALL times. I've run into people in a grocery store that I haven't seen in years, and had the conversation turn to their latest business venture. Turned out they needed business advice, and out came one of my cards, ready at all times. This doesn't mean you have to be working all the time. It just means you need to be PREPARED all the time. You never know where opportunity is lurking.

Which brings me to tradeshows. ALWAYS have your cards with you, updated, in good physical shape, on the ready to hand out. A card that says who you are and what you do. A good impression in the making. I was recently at an expo and had a giveaway basket, and my own cards next to it. I would say a good 10%-15% of the cards I found in that basket at the end of the expo had my OWN cards in there with the other person's information on the back. What do you think I did with those?

It is an easy habit to get into and one which can easily maximize opportunities to expand your network, and thus, your net worth. Bottom line? Don't leave home without them!!

