



July 12, 2009

## When, how to give a business card

*By Jill Haney*

### **A reader asks: When is the proper time to exchange business cards with someone?**

If you're at an informal meeting or networking event and the other person appears interested in your services or product, it is appropriate to offer a business card at the end of the conversation.

Same goes if you meet someone by chance over dinner (or any meal for that matter). Wait until the meal is concluded; it is inappropriate to offer your business card while you are eating.

If you're attending a scheduled meeting, whether at an office or over a meal, it is recommended you exchange cards at the beginning or end of the meeting.

It may seem inconsequential, but the way that business cards are exchanged and treated speaks volumes about the person offering or receiving the cards. The exchange can be handled very comfortably by following a few general guidelines:

Cards should be printed on high-quality paper and be professional in design. They should include your name, name of company, title, contact information and cell number if appropriate. Keep it simple, and avoid information overload.

Keep your cards current. It is very unprofessional to cross out outdated information and write in current information. If your card uses a photo (which I do not prefer), make sure it's a recent picture.

When offering or exchanging cards with someone, offer only one card. Otherwise, it may seem that you are asking the recipient to do your networking for you.

When receiving a business card, be sure to take time to review the information, as it shows respect to the giver of the card. Don't be rude by immediately shoving it into your wallet or your shirt pocket before you've reviewed it.

If meeting with someone of a higher rank or position, wait for that person to offer his or her card to you first. If it's not offered, do not offer yours.

Business card exchange etiquette can vary from culture to culture, so do your due diligence if doing business with international companies.

A best piece of advice is this: Always have business cards on hand. I have embarrassed myself on more than one occasion when unable to provide a business card when asked. I have been asked for cards on weekends, at my children's sporting events and at the grocery store. I have learned the hard way to never leave home without them.

That said, there are times when it's best to refrain from offering a card. Julie Bauke of Cincinnati-based Congruity Career Consulting recommends "exchanging business cards when and only when you have found a purpose in doing something in common, a potential business or personal connection that you both agree to pursue."

For example, I have met many people at networking events who appear to have no interest in what I do or the services I provide. For me to offer my business card would be presumptuous and even costly.

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