

## Smart Ways to Use Your Business Card

The business card is the most powerful single business tool--dollar for dollar--you can invest in. It's compact, energy-efficient, low-cost, low-tech, and keeps working for you hours, weeks and even years after it leaves your hands!

The two main functions of your card are to gain business from the person you give it to and to get your name out to other people with whom the first person comes in contact with via referrals. With that in mind, let's take a look at the most effective ways to use your business cards.

### **Make Your Cards Accessible in Every Situation**

In short, don't leave home without them! It's a great idea to keep a small box of your cards in your glove box, just in case you find yourself in a situation where you need more than you've carried in your pocket or purse. Keep an eye on your supply. The time to reorder is before you're in danger of running out.

### **Seek Situations to Exchange Business Cards**

Whenever you have a one-on-one meeting with someone new or someone you haven't seen for a while, give her your business card. Conventions and trade shows are another great venue for exchanging business cards. The vendors at the trade shows are anxious for you to take their card--don't make that a one-way street. Be sure you give them your card as well. When you visit a non-competing business that might attract the same people you would like to have as customers, ask if you may leave a supply of cards to be handed out or made available. In most cases, a business that's complementary to your own is always looking for a networking partner. An example would be a sports nutritionist leaving a stack of cards at a martial arts studio.

### **Contacts at a Distance**

Enclose several cards in every packet of sales material you mail out. Along with your thank-you note to the businessperson whose referral brought you a major contract, include a business card to replace the one she gave away, plus several more.

After any telephone call in which business was discussed, follow up with a letter outlining the main points of your discussion and include one or more of your cards.

### **Special Tricks of the Trade**

After you get someone's card and have ended your time with her, make notes on the back of the card to jog your memory about something special that'll help you remember her. Don't do that in front of her, or you run the risk of making the impression that you are "forgetful." If you need to record information immediately during your discussion, such as telephone numbers or other data not on the card, use one of your own cards. You don't want her to think you view her card as scrap paper upon which to take notes.

At a restaurant, leave your card with the tip and write a personal thank-you note on the back or pay the highway toll for the Mercedes behind you, and leave your card for the driver!

Take maximum advantage of your business card's full potential. And never, ever, be caught out without it.

*Dr. Ivan Misner is the Founder and Chairman of BNI, the world's largest business and referral organization, which has more than 4,600 chapters in 37 countries. Janice Malone, a Mobile-based Marketing consultant and speaker, is Executive Director of BNI Southern Alabama/Northwest Florida Region. For more information, contact Janice Malone at [jmalone@bni.com](mailto:jmalone@bni.com) and (251) 479-1329 (in Mobile) or 1(800) 781-9599 (outside Mobile).*