

My business card is not a pass to your newsletter

This is a quick rant because I just received an newsletter from a woman I met at an event two or three years ago. I haven't heard from her since, but apparently she has just decided doing a newsletter is a good idea and that her list will include names from all the people from whom she has collected a business card. It didn't help that the newsletter was addressed to "Brody," not "Ms. Brody" or "Deborah."

I immediately unsubscribed, not only because the last thing I need is another newsletter, but because this woman apparently thinks that my giving her my business card is an invitation to be added to a list. It does not. Business cards provide contact information, yes, but they do not have any power to agree to anything. I did not agree to be added to a list, and I certainly did not ask to be added to a list.

Here's the thing: direct marketing that complies with the CAN-SPAM laws requires opt-in permission. Just having my business card in your possession is not permission to add me to your list.

The only way that having my business card gives you a pass to get me to be on your marketing list is if you use that contact information to get in touch with me first. For example, you might send me a personal, non-mass email asking me if I would be interested in your list, or perhaps asking me to visit your website where I would have the option to sign up for your newsletter, or you could call me (you know, on the phone) to set up a coffee date and talk to me.

A business card is a networking tool, nothing more. If you use the contact information on the business card to send me unsolicited material, then you are a spammer, plain and

simple.

Rant over.

Thoughts?