

Business cards

Dos and Don'ts

Do have a business card, even if you don't yet have a business off the ground. There is nothing worse than people who go to networking events and don't have business cards. Go get plain cards with your name, phone and email at the very least. When you are more set up then spend more money.

Do use both sides of the card. The other side can hold more information about your services. It is extra real estate space, use it.

Don't make your cards super unusual. Cards that are odd sizes, vertical instead of horizontal or folded are hard to put away easily. Most people either put them in a Rolldex of some sort or scan them. If your card is too small or too big for these applications it will get lost. I particularly hate vertical cards and folded cards.

Do use a professional design. When possible, hire a graphic designer to do your entire letterhead package. It looks nicer.

Don't go too cheap. Unless you are brand spanking new, don't go for the cheapest black ink on white crappy paper cards from your inkjet if you can all avoid it. It looks, well, cheap.

Don't use other people's cards. If you work for yourself do not under any circumstances just fill out your name on someone else's card. Looks bad.

Do make sure you have the correct information. By this I mean, your card should have your name, company name, phone number, email address, at a minimum. You can add street address, fax, cell phone number, Twitter handle, and other info.

Don't sacrifice legibility for information. If you have to use a ridiculously small point size to fit in too much information

on the card, forget about it. The point of the card is to let people find you EASILY, without the help of a magnifying glass.

I have said it before and I will say it again, if you are in business of any kind, you need a business card. It is an easy way to provide other people your information. Before you go to your next networking event, take a look at what you are giving out. Does it help or hinder you?

Why a thank you is good marketing



Thank you for reading this post, and thank you for reading my blog. I probably haven't thanked you before, so I apologize, because this post is about how thank you is really a marketing tool.

We've all heard of customer appreciation. Often, it is a deal available to new customers. Sometimes it is a gift with purchase. In many cases, the customer has to do something additional to get appreciated—sign up for a new service or buy more.

What about customers that just use a service, like a gym, cable, phone and have been using it for years. Do they ever get thanked? No, they often don't. Why? Because companies take the bulk of their customer base for granted. They imagine that if they are providing the service, and there is no problem, the customer will remain loyal. But in fact, customers are not always loyal. They will switch for lower prices, or better service. They may also switch because a company does not seem to appreciate they have a choice in service providers. This is why more banks and customer service agents start any conversation with you by saying things like "thank you for banking with us."

The bottom line is that saying thank you is about expressing appreciation. And most everyone likes to be appreciated. And yet, thank yous are sometimes hard to come by.

In your personal marketing or personal branding, saying thank you may be even more important. Think about it: What are you saying when you don't say thank you? You are communicating that you are uninterested, unappreciated, or that you take the gesture for granted. It makes you seem rude and self-involved. Some people will claim they are too busy to respond. Are you too busy to make sure that you are perceived properly?

Remember, no one is forced to be your customer unless you are

a monopoly. And no one is required to help you out unless he or she wants to. It is simple to say thank you. Saying thank you boosts the perception that you care, that you are aware that what the customer or friend has given you has some value.

What's it all about?

This post is about “about” pages. You know, the pages that describe your organization. On blogs, the about pages gives a sense to visitors who the author is. I would say this is crucial information. It helps us judge the trustworthiness of the content. Say that I am a student of public relations, at the PhD level, and I say so on my about page. You may surmise that my content has a scholarly bent based on my research. However, say that I am a student, in high school. And I write about public relations. You may conclude that I am still learning and that my blog is an attempt to explore social media.

I have come across many blogs lacking an about page. That is a mistake. A big mistake. Your about page does not have to be long and fancy. Just tell me who you are and what you are doing. That's it. Use it to build your credibility.

Just today I came across this blog: <http://prnext.wordpress.com/> It purports to be a monthly ezine about PR. It gives some rather dubious advice and info (like PR took a backseat to advertising in the 90s, really? says who?). In any case, I want to know who is behind the blog, and guess what, the about page is blank. Immediately, I think these people do not know ANYTHING about PR if they don't even have any basics about themselves. So, their credibility is challenged.

Take a look at your blog, your website, your LinkedIn. What have you done in the about sections? Have you communicated who you are and what you do, at the very least?

In

More thoughts on personal marketing

Last week, I was working at a conference. I was hired to write reports about several workshops. Two other women were hired in the same role. One of these women was warm and friendly. She wanted to chat and have lunch. She swapped business cards. The other was very reserved. She did not seem interested in having lunch, chatting, or even the conference itself. The friendly woman has her own business. She says it's going well. The second woman had recently been laid off. She was searching for work and was using the conference as an additional source of income. She had business cards from her previous employer, which obviously was not the correct contact information.

Here are a few lessons on personal marketing this second woman could learn:

- Friendliness can create connection. Connection can lead to other opportunities. Also people will want to help if they can, but not if they don't like you.
- Business cards are important. If you have been laid off, use an online service like Vista Print to get cards printed cheaply or free. Print pertinent contact information on the card.
- Look beyond the current opportunity and be future oriented.

It is hard to gauge how you are presenting yourself. However, why not try and see how people are responding to you. Are they smiling, interested in what you have to say? Or are you sending signals that you are not interested? You never know where the next opportunity could come from, or what you can learn from other people. Closing yourself off is not a good path to expand your opportunities.