

How Much Business Are You Losing From Your Business Card?

By Debbie Allen

Does your card accurately underline what your business is all about? Your business card may be the first visual evidence about your company. Your card will either promote or deflate your professional image and the success of your business at a glance. If a prospective customer views the business image as unprofessional or confusing they will simply not show interest.

So if you want more business ... improve your business image!

While presenting marketing seminars to thousands of business people around the world, I discovered that many had a poor representation of their business starting with their business cards. After leaving my presentations, I would pull out the attendees' business cards to learn more about what their business was all about.

What I discovered was shocking! Many presented a poor and unprofessional image of the business at first glance. Very few business cards or marketing materials had an effective message that described the business clearly. Most lacked a strong visual logo, branded image, or benefit-rich phrase that set them apart from their competition.

With this newfound discovery, I began to ask members of the audience to stay after my presentation to receive a free business card evaluation. This intrigued attendees, and many waited for up to an hour to have a chance to talk with me personally to get feedback on how to improve.

Most of us are so close to our businesses that we don't see the most obvious mistakes. The reason for this is that we don't always look at our business through the customers' eyes. We often view it from a very narrow focus. This can be disastrous for a company's image!

Just as people judge individuals at first glance, so they judge a business image the same way. If a prospective customer views the business image as unprofessional or confusing they will simply not be interested.

That same prospective customer would then be lost to a competitor that does a better job at marketing their company's image, brand and uniqueness.

The goal of an organization should be to create a strong, immediate message that clearly defines their business.

The message must connect an emotional bond with their customers both verbally and visually. This same image and message must be coherent on all of the company's marketing materials.

So, where do you start? A great place to start improving your business image is to take a close look at your business card as if you were a prospective customer. First, compare it with the list of top 10 mistakes below, and then take Debbie Allen's Instant Business Card Improvement Quiz™.

The 10 Most Common Business Card Mistakes

- 1.Scrambles messages with inconsistent design elements.
- 2.Does not clearly define your business services and/or products.
- 3.Does not make you uniqueness and brand memorable.
- 4.Indicates unflattering things about your business.
- 5.Does not generate additional business.
- 6.Creates a cluttered impression.
- 7.Omits essential information, or is filled with non-essential information.
- 8.Looks out of date or information no longer applies.
- 9.Is hard to read or confusing to the eye.
- 10.Lacks a point of interest, image or theme.

How Does Your Business Card Rank?

Take the quiz below by placing a checkmark in the **YES** or **NO** column according to how your current business card applies.

Instant Business Card Improvement Quiz™	YES	NO
Presents a positive, interesting and professional image	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Features an attention grabbing and professionally designed logo that is unique to your business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The logo 'visually' defines what you sell at a glance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Benefits and features are described in branded catch phrase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Typeface and text size is easy to read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

No more than two typefaces are used in the design		
Good use of color to present the image of your business		
Color design is consistent with other marketing materials		
E-mail and website address are featured boldly		
Card has been updated and improved within the past year		
Back of card is used for additional information		
Features all services you offer to your customers		
Each staff member has his or her own personalized business cards		
You act upon every opportunity to present your business card		
You receive comments from others such as, "What a great card!"		
Prospects often ask more about the business when viewing your card		

Count all the YES answers above, and see how your card ranks below:

- ___ 16 to 13 YES responses
You have a professional card that will help you turn prospects into buyers.
- ___ 12 to 9 YES responses
Your business card needs some work. Re-design your card for effectiveness.
- ___ 8 or less YES
Get to work! Re-evaluate and re-design your business card now.