

One Tool You Cannot be Without

By Ronelle Ingram April 2008

Email, voice, Website, telephone contact . . . Who needs a business card in today's electronic world? Inside sales reps often underestimate the power of the business card. One of the most under utilized items in a telephone marketing person's arsenal of selling tools is their business card.

The business card can be as powerful as your database, Web site advertisement, email or voice mail message. Your business card allows for an additional mailed follow-up as well as a something that can be touched and saved by the customer. A business card allows you to be within easy reach on the buyer's desk.

Successful sales people require reordering of business cards on a regular basis. When is the last time *you* ordered business cards? The presentation of a business card to customers is a ritual of professional business behavior in our society. Just because you are meeting was on the phone, there is no excuse for not giving your customer your professional identification. After the initial telephone conversation, follow up by mailing a Thank You note with your business card.

The customer's decision of "their buyer of choice" is sometimes a matter of convenience. Your chances of making a sale today is increased each time a customer has the opportunity to touch your company's name, product affiliation, Web site, email, telephone and fax number. People still do use a Rolodex for storing and organizing contact information. The simple use of a business card is a cost effective, non-threatening, proactive tool for successful ongoing sales.

I send a Thank You note and my business card to every new customer I interact with on the telephone. My business card is included with every correspondence that leaves my office; be it customer, dealer or vendor. Even if the end user is a twenty-year customer, I always send my card with any written communication.

Promoting Good Employee Morale

High employee morale and excellent customer relations go hand in hand. If you want your telephone sales reps to act in a professional, pro-customer manner, treat them as professionals. All sales reps should be issued business cards. As the company takes on new products, the business cards should be updated to reflect your new market coverage. Whenever a promotion is made, new business cards should be issued. Many manufacturers sponsor some sort of Product Knowledge Proficiency Program. As your sales rep earns certification from a key vendor, their business cards should reflect their newly earned status.

I continually stress the need for my reps to have their business cards in a convenient location for ease of availability. Try doing a reality check of your sales floor. Randomly ask your staff for a business card. If they cannot give you a business card within 15 seconds, they probably are not dispersing the company's mini advertising billboard to your (potential) customers.

Cost-Effective Medium

The business card can become your company's most cost effective advertising medium. Today's business cards have e-mail addresses, photographs, maps to simplify finding the local office, advertising of new products, lamination, cards printed on both sides, folded tent cards, dual or triple color, holographic, perforated edges, the list goes on and on. If you perceive yourself as a creative aggressive business, make sure your business cards reflect your conception.

Once your employees are conditioned to carry their business cards, stretch their comfort level of use. Cards are to be given to friends, family members, business associates, church members and posted on the local neighborhood bulletin boards. Every contact you make, in or out of your 8 to 5 daily routine, should receive your business card. You never know when the next person you meet may have an immediate need for your products. It is universally acceptable to hand someone your business card. Wedding, funeral, car accident, soccer game, high school reunion, church or the grocery store; any chance encounter can logically result in the exchanging of business cards.

Exchange is a key word. When you hand someone your card, it then becomes good business manners to receive one of theirs. It is an easy way to instantly attain all the needed information on your (hopefully) newest customer.

I recently was called by a local restaurant manager seeking information on purchasing a new piece of equipment. At the end of the conversation, I questioned, "How did you hear about our company?"

"I saw your business card in our monthly drawing fish bowl." As it turned out, I did not win the free lunch, but this restaurant is now our customer, thanks to my business card.

Any time you attend a professional meeting, have your business cards ready for sharing. This shows any potential customer or joint venture company that you are prepared. Any businessperson who does not have enough foresight or customer savvy to have a clean, unwrinkled business card ready to share, is probably not the type of company with which you want to do business.

Advertising, self-pride, professionalism . . . the business card is the right tool for the job – and it is the one tool you cannot be without.

Ronelle Ingram is a writer, speaker, author of *Service with a Smile* and is a regular columnist for ENX Magazine and Imaging Spectrum. Ronelle is the 2008-9 President of BTA. A UCLA graduate, Ronelle has taught her practical management principles to thousands of office equipment professionals throughout the USA, Canada, Australia and Europe. Ms Ingram's greatest credential is her 30+ years of hands on experience of running a very profitable service and telemarketing departments. For more information ronellei@msn.com 714.744.9032 www.ronelleingram.com