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What is Proper Business Card Etiquette?

Understanding proper business card etiquette can be the difference between being remembered as a professional with a service to offer or as an unprofessional amateur looking for the next meal. Knowing how to present and receive business cards is part of marketing yourself and your business.

Having a business card is essential when seeking out or making contacts. Business cards are one of the most effective forms of marketing if used correctly. A part of the correct use of business cards is understanding proper business card etiquette. Business card etiquette can vary from one society to another but the basic guidelines remain the same everywhere business cards are utilized. This requires business persons to know how to present, exchange and accept business cards wherever they are.

Presenting Your Business Card



Presentable business cards are part of proper business card etiquette. The first thing to remember when presenting a business card is the look of the card itself. Having clean, crisp, clear business cards provides the recipient with a professional image of both you and your firm.

Do not force your business card on others; allow the situation to provide the moment for you. Present the business card as you are introducing yourself or include it with other material about your services or company. If you are dealing with the owner or president of a firm, wait for them to present their card first or ask you for yours.

Always have a business card ready. You are never aware of when a potential contact will be, or has been, made. Always ask to place your card at a location; and allow the business to dictate where the card will go. Ask for a business card in return. If there is a holder with cards, ask to take one and then do so.

Present your business card face up unless there is a reason to do otherwise. Information such as driving directions, pricing, business hours or alternate contact numbers are examples of the exception to this rule. Present the card so the recipient doesn't have to adjust the card in any way. The recipient should be able to read the card in the position you hand it to them.

Exchanging Business Cards

Since presenting your business card should be done with respect for others, receiving one should also be done accordingly. Always take a business card when one is presented to you, even if you may not need it. You don't know who they know that would bring you business. Look at the card being given to

you with more than a brief glance. Read the card, and comment on the information being given to you with a positive response.

Acting Locally When Going International

If you are traveling internationally, make sure your business cards are adaptable to the location you are traveling to. A part of proper business card etiquette is having your card written in the correct format so the recipient can easily understand it; this includes having cards printed in the recipient's language on one side of the card, using correct grammar and in proper format for their customs. This shows respect not only for their business but for their culture. Make sure to present your business card with the recipient's language facing up so they don't need to translate anything.

Know the local customs when interacting with international firms. Many countries have their own etiquette guidelines. Here are a few examples:

Handling – In China you would present your business card with both hands; in Japan you offer your card with one hand, but accept a card with both hands. Indians use their right hand to both offer and accept business cards.

Titles – Put university degrees or honors on cards used in India; use formal titles on business cards when in Japan.

Always treat any business card with as much respect as you would treat the person who gives you the card. Many cultures deem business cards as an extension of the person presenting the card. Because of this it is also important to keep your cards as close to pristine as possible. Following proper business card etiquette won't itself win a new or client, but it will ensure that you don't lose the opportunity because of bad manners.

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