

Q&A Column
Author: Mark Swartz

Email Subject Line: Business Cards For Job Hunting

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Headline : Creating Your “Transitional Business Card”

Summary:

Question: I think I embarrassed myself a while back when trying to network. I went to a local chapter meeting one evening for the Association of Administrative Assistants. Every time someone asked me for a business card I handed them a resume instead. I think some of them were offended. Should I be carrying some sort of business card around while I'm looking for work?

Debbie F., Edmonton, Alberta

Landing Page copy

Headline : Creating Your “Transitional Business Card”

Dear Mark,

Question: I think I embarrassed myself a little last week when trying to network. I went to a local chapter meeting on Thursday evening for the Association of Administrative Assistants. Right now I'm out of work as an Executive Assistant and I wanted to make some new contacts. You know, with people who might be able to help me find a job. But every time someone asked me for a business card I handed them a resume instead. I think some of them were offended, like I was being too forward. Should I be carrying some sort of business card around while I'm looking for work?

Debbie F., Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Debbie,

Put the shoe on the other foot for a moment: you're at a gathering of your professional peers and someone approaches you for assistance. You would like to help out if you can. All you're asking for right now is their card so you can use it to contact them at some future point. However they foist a full blown resume on you instead. Does this seem fair to you? After all, if you'd wanted to see their resume, you'd either have asked for it directly, or else you would have contacted them later to request one, at your convenience, right?

The norm in Canada when meeting new business or professional contacts face to face is to exchange business cards at some point during your discussion. It provides the other party with a handy way of referencing you should they want to do so in the future. A resume, on the other hand, is a formal, detailed document. It is designed for applying to jobs, not necessarily for giving out to everyone new you encounter.

Getting a personalized “transitional business card” made is easy and inexpensive. Just go to any print shop or business supply store that has a custom printing area. The idea is to have something produced that is professional looking, yet simple. No fancy graphics required – unless

you're in a field where creativity or design savvy are pivotal. All you need is a basic black and white card on substantial stock. The following information is key:

- your name
- a professional identifier, such as Executive Assistant, Marketing Specialist, or whatever your area of expertise is
- contact information, such as a phone number and e-mail address
- the city or town you live in

Anything else that you choose to add is optional. This may include things like a cell phone or pager number, your web site address if you have one, or a mailing address including street number and postal code. Note that unless you are expecting people to send you letters or packages directly to the place where you live, it is not necessary to list your home address. Also you can add your academic degrees and professional certifications next to your name, if you think these will be helpful.

One more thing: if you are running a small business or consulting practice on the side, leave those types of cards in your pocket or purse for now. As a job hunter you don't want to confuse people. Potential employers and networking contacts might question your commitment to finding a job if you appear to already be self-employed and working.

An example of a basic, professional looking card is as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;">Louise Braemart, Dip. Admin.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Executive Assistant</p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">Edmonton, Alberta</p> <p style="text-align: center;">P. (780) 999 1111 E-Mail lbreamart@albertanet.ca</p>

Typically it costs in the neighborhood of \$40 - \$60 dollars for between 500 to 1,000 such cards. A reasonable price to pay for something that is so important, yet so often overlooked.