

# Do you need a business card?

By Kathleen D. Pagana, RN, PhD



**IF YOU'VE BEEN WONDERING** whether you should have a business card, or if you've decided to get a business card but you're not sure what to do next, consider these five questions.

## Why do I need a business card?

To network, every professional needs a business card that captures essential contact information. Recently, a colleague asked if I wanted to run with her in a 5K race to support breast cancer research. When I asked for details, she wrote the Web site address on the back of her business card and told me to call her with any questions. Isn't that better than writing on a table napkin?

Hospital patients love receiving business cards from their caregivers. It gives them a sense of having access to key personnel.

You can also clip your card to a report or note you're sending. The card tells the addressee you are the sender and provides your contact information.

## What information should be on my business card?

That depends on the purpose of the card. Some basics include your name, degrees, position, mailing address, e-mail address, phone number, and fax number. If

you're promoting a service, such as consulting, make sure you have "Consultant" on the card.

You can add a personal touch by writing information for a specific contact on

your card. For example, if because of travel, contacting you will be difficult, you can write your cell phone number on the back of the card. Your contact will appreciate this thoughtful gesture.

## Can I make my own business card?

Homemade cards look homemade, and professionally printed cards look professional. Keep in mind: Your business card is a graphic first impression of you and the services you offer.

Yes, you do! To find out why you need a card—and how to use it effectively—read on.

Make sure your cards are in good condition. Don't use a card if it is soiled, bent, or ripped. Giving no card is better than giving one in bad condition.

## What are the common mistakes I must avoid?

- *Passing out your cards as though you're dealing a deck of cards.* You want to be asked for your card. To achieve this, ask the other person for her card.
- *Presenting the card face down or upside down.* Present your card with the content face up and readable. The receiver should be able to glance at the card and make a comment—for example, "I see you are a Breast Health Specialist."
- *Writing on the card without asking permission.* In some parts of the world, such as Japan, you deface the card if you write on it without asking permission.
- *Not having your cards with you.* You never know when someone will ask you for a business card. Keep cards with you at all times—preferably in a business card holder that will maintain their condition.
- *Not having a card and asking for someone else's card to write on the back.* This is rude. You should jot your information on a piece of paper. Then, make sure this doesn't happen again!

## How does business card etiquette differ around the world?

If you'll be in a foreign country for business, do some research on business card etiquette before leaving home. People in some countries, such as Germany, are impressed by education and want to see all degrees and titles on the card. People in other countries have a particular way of presenting a card. For example, in China, you should hold the card in both hands when presenting it.

## Business card success

In today's business world, having your own professional-looking business card is fundamental. Knowing how and when to use it successfully is crucial. ★

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