

Why Business Cards Should be VALUED... not Buried!

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Don't Trash Business Cards! They Could be a Gold Mine for Business Development.



How often have you walked away from a conference or networking event with dozens of business cards only to shove them away in your desk drawer? Did you even stop to look at the cards? If not, you could be missing a golden opportunity for **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**.

Business cards not only offer bits of information about a person, they also:

- **Can mark the beginning of a new business relationship; one that brings you a new client and fees!**
- **Can be an addition to your network of referral sources.**

So, if you shouldn't throw it away, what *should* you do with a business card?

First, take a moment to **READ IT**. Take note of the person's title. Is it clever or unusual in any way? Check if it lists the person's cell phone number; you may need it one day. Make sure it also has the person's Website and e-mail address.

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Be sure to turn the card over and write the date of your encounter with that person. Also, write where you were and what you talked about. Make sure to note any follow-up promises you made.

Second, **STORE THE INFORMATION** that is on the card. Either you or your assistant should enter the business card information into a database, or something similar to Outlook Contacts. Be sure that whatever is written on the back of the card is added to the database as well.

Storing business card information into a program like Outlook Contacts will allow you to easily search and find contacts when you're in a pinch. This will become especially important as your contact list grows and you have thousands of entries.

Whatever you do, **DO NOT RELY ON MEMORY** to store this information.

Third, **NURTURE THE RELATIONSHIP**. You have the data, now it's time to develop a relationship.

As you talk to the person, find and record:

- **Names of family members and the ages of their children.**
- **Interests.**
- **Job changes or new degrees earned.**
- **Business challenges.** Make note of personal career setbacks, tough competitors, new products or services. Knowing this information help you demonstrate that understand the other person's needs.

Finally, **LINK UP** with your new contact on LinkedIn. This is particularly important when you meet journalists and potential clients. It's free! It takes only seconds! And, it shows that you're a little tech-savvy.

The next time you're handed a business card - don't bury it in your desk. Seize the golden opportunity to build business and a new relationship. Remember: Who you know is sometimes more important than what you know.

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