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## Ode to the Lowly Business Card

I talk (or mostly listen) to a lot of people at various events and love doing it because I sincerely like to help investors whenever possible but within reason. I almost always ask for a business card to remember them. I also keep their cards if they have a “specialty” for future use and usually add them to our email list. Many investors swap their cards to gather email lists to sell their properties. This is likely the slowest and most tedious way to accumulate a buyers list. For a few predatory investors, card swapping is a great way to get newbies’ cards to sell them deals they couldn’t otherwise sell.

It never fails to amaze me that when I ask an investor for his card I only get one of four answers:

75% of the time – “I don’t have one yet, but I’m working on it.”

10% of the time – “I left it in the car.” But I almost never get one from him.

5% of the time - “I just ran out” yeah.

10% of the time I actually get a business card – this is where the fun begins!

These cards run the gauntlet from home computer manufactured cards with perforated edges (that feel perforated but aren’t supposed to) to cards having all kinds of canned graphics and all the way to the vanity pictures. I love these vanity cards as I stare at the card and the individual and wonder how many years ago this shot was taken – 10, 15 or 25? Often I ask myself, “Is this even the same person?”

Then there are the bright neon colors that scream “Cash for Houses” – so loud that they can be used as hand warmers in the winter. They were fashionable 20 years ago and plenty of them are still circulating. Neon Pink seems to be the most popular, but I prefer a more professional image.

Next are the bi-folds that have so much information that you have to take a lunch break to read them. The card owner puts it all out there about being able to solve problems the homeowner doesn’t even know existed. They sometimes are tough to get into card holders sleeves because some are not folded exactly in half. Another reason to discard them....

Talk about 1970 all over again – it’s the 3-D cards. Your eyes seem to start spinning by themselves as you struggle to read the tiny writing on them. Why do they make the writing so small when the card is moving all by itself in front of you? I think I still have some retina damage from the last one I stared at for only 30 seconds.

Then there are the intentionally oversized cards that won’t fit through card scanners and certainly not in your card files or sleeves. It’s probably more cost effective to use postcards. You can always trim the card to make it fit in your

filing system. Maybe that was the idea behind the guy that gave it to you – aggravate you enough that you have to remember them, even if it is not fond memories. These are just as bad as all those ID cards you get that you have to fit in your wallet that never fit and have to be trimmed – what are these people thinking? Do they only have one size and that being the wrong size for all wallet-sized cards?

The most intriguing cards are the ones with no names, addresses or even telephone numbers – just a website! I see these in MLM (Multi-Level Marketing) programs where the promoters of the MLM product don't want the "card giver" to even try to explain the product. This is likely because the card giver may find out the product is so over-priced he can't justify the price, but the website can sell quality, scarcity and all the money anyone can make.

I love the cute little mini-CDs business cards. Just pop them into your CD reader in your computer and a mini-video or audio starts to play. Really cute, the issue I have is they seem to always jam my computer and drive and I really remember the card giver as I insert a paper clip in the little hole in the drive to eject the mini-CD - which then goes straight into the trash.

I really love the ingenuity of what I call "20-Card Joe". This guy has a different business card for every possible vocation that he feels he can make a buck on. The logic is impeccable – give the buyer what he wants – mortgage broker, realtor, investor, short sale specialist, loan modification specialist, handyman, trash removal, and who knows what else. I love it when I ask for their card and a folio comes out and they carefully search through 5 – 10 cards for the one that they think best equates to how I envision them. Sometimes this can take minutes to get right!

The cards with fancy logos or that have beautiful graphics combined with a company name can be intriguing, but often they tell the reader absolutely nothing -but graphically are very interesting. Some we have reviewed for students are truly magnificent, but they lack a vital component – "What does the card giver do and why do I have his card?"

Personally, my highest interest card was an idea I had to have a cartoon character drawn for me by a famous national cartoonist. After much effort and weeks of negotiation, I secured the very guy I wanted and paid him \$2,000 for a cartoon of a homeowner chained to a house. The homeowner (cartoon character) was trying to break loose of the chain but the chain was too strong.

I didn't need a title and just used a number of different captions below the cartoon such as "Need Help?" and "I Can Stop Your Foreclosure", "Break the Chain That Binds You", etc. All of them were pretty effective in getting distressed homeowners to call me. In this case a picture was worth a 1,000 words. My contact info was on the other side of the card or postcard which was equally

effective. What was interesting was the hard time I had getting the original drawing (sketches) from the cartoonist – seems they like to keep them for the portfolio to sell in the future when they can't draw any more.

Business cards are very important to your getting deals. They subtly tell the person receiving the card who you are and what you do. They bring with them a sense of professionalism, garish wonder or a heightened sense of surprise of what is this person all about? They are your cheapest form of advertising, why not do it correctly? And if they have an error on them, throw them OUT! They are cheap enough to replace rather than having a recipient wondering if your business sense is similar to what is plastered on your card.

TIPS - If you want to get an ongoing return on your card, get a magnetic card made or buy magnetic backing at the office supply store. These “stick to ‘em” cards are best for dealing with homeowners who will stick your card to their refrigerator – unless their refrigerator is stainless steel, in which case it won't stick! P.S. – don't store them near your computer or you may lose your magnetic media – your hard drive!

Put as much contact info on the card as possible – office telephone, cell telephone, fax, email, your name and title, and last but not least, what you want the recipient to know you do! I like to have the backside of my cards blank and non-glossy so someone I give the card to can write on it – hopefully something nice to remember me by – such as how handsome I am – yeah!

Take a closer look at the next business card you get and see if it doesn't fall into one of the categories above – and what you might do differently. The lowly business card is your cheapest form of printed advertising so do it right!

To your limitless success,

Dave Dinkel