Business Card Design:
7 Essentials to Consider

Within the first 10 seconds, your potential client is building up a lasting opinion about you. It sounds harsh but it's a fact that people often **do** judge a book by its cover, and you only get one shot to make a great first impression.

Fortunately, there are a few tricks you can pull off, such as diverting their attention from the fact that you forgot to iron your shirt by pushing a unique and beautifully designed business card under their nose.


It's always a great idea to carry some self-promotional material in your pocket, whether you're attending a conference where networking is key, or for instances when you bump into an old friend who is now a possible business partner. Having said that, your business card should also be designed well enough to leave a good impression. Below is a list of essential tips to keep in mind when designing the perfect business card.

The issue of Size and Colour

Decide on a business card printer before you begin the design process. You can find out the size of their cards (and whether it is what you are looking for) and their supported file types. The most common card size is 84 mm x 55 mm, so the best document size to work on is 1039 x 697 pixels; remember that you need to take Bleed (more on this after the break) into account. Ensure any images you use are at least 300dpi for a high quality result.

It's a good idea to work in CMYK colour mode as opposed to RGB. CMYK stands for **C**yan, **M**agenta, **Y**ellow and Blac**k** (Black is known as **K**ey), and is used in colour printing. CMYK is a subtractive colour model, which works by masking colours on a light or white background, reducing the amount and colour of the light that is reflected by the paper.
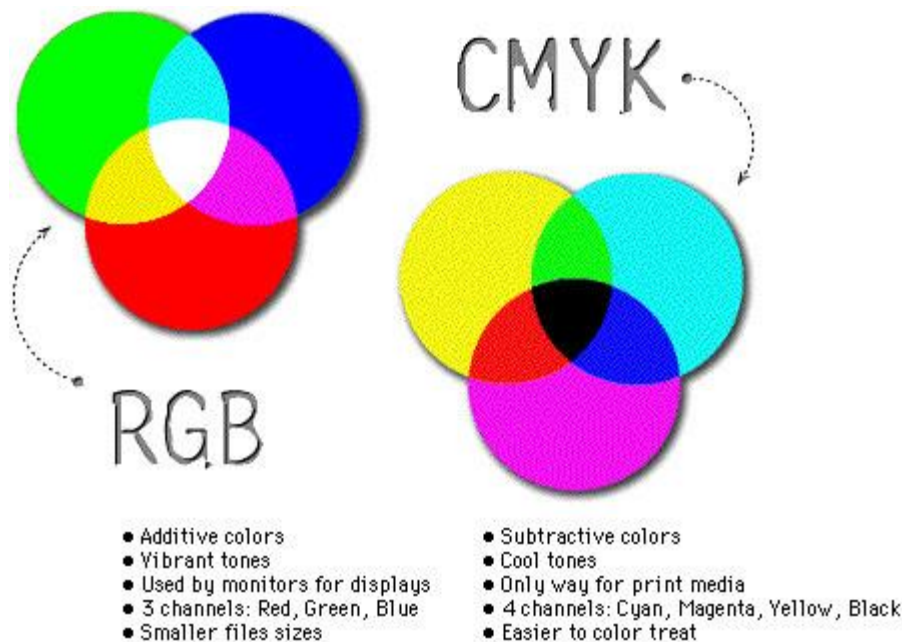
The display you are using to read this article adopts an RGB or additive colour model, mixing Red, Green and Blue to create the majority of the visible spectrum, and combining all three to create white. While some designers prefer to design in RGB, be sure to preview it in CMYK as some of your chosen colours may appear fine on screen, but 'muddy' when printed.

Prepare the Bleed Area

KEY

Safe Area

Make sure any text or sensitive information is contained in the box, otherwise it could get cut off.

Trim

This is where we aim to cut your cards.

Bleed area

We cut the bleed area off your cards to avoid white strips on the edge. Make sure any images or colours fill this area.

Unless your design background colour is white you need to prepare the Bleed area for your card design. Preparing the Bleed (yes, it sounds like a heavy metal band) involves highlighting an area surrounding the document, usually 3 mm thick (this may vary depending on the printing company) with the same colour as the background colour of your card design. This prevents any ugly border strips from turning up on the edge of the cards.

Avoid using borders

In fact, it's best to try to avoid using borders on your business card designs at all. They may look good, but when the cards are cut, you will most likely have some 'lop-sided' edges. All printers have a margin of error for cutting your cards, which can be as much as a few millimetres, so expect some variance in the area where the blade falls.

What you see on screen:

What you may receive:

Notice how the borders disappear when the blades do not cut at the right places? A few millimetres can make all the difference to your card design.

Use Complementary Colours

Choose colours that are aesthetically pleasing. A mish-mash of bright and bold colours may make your card stand out in a stack of 50, but it could be for the wrong reasons. It's also worthwhile to think beyond your business cards: try to keep your colour scheme consistent throughout your media (website, twitter, email signature) to develop a professional image of yourself.

There are plenty of tools available on the Web to help you create the perfect scheme. COLOURlovers is a community-driven website where people can create colour palettes and allow others to vote and comment on them. It's a great source of inspiration, with some impressive tools to boot.

Ensure your text is readable

This is a pretty vital (and sometimes overlooked) element in business card design. You wouldn't want your clients to have to strain their eyes to read your website address or email. Make sure your text is at least 8 pt, in a clear readable font and in bold colour. Anything smaller than 8 pt may look fine on your monitor, but may be printed as a fuzzy, smudged-out line. You could also try to accentuate your name or important contact information by making it slightly bigger or bolder than the rest of your information.

Include Important Information

Make sure you include all the information on the back of your card that you think the client would find useful. We've provided a quick checklist, but you may have other things you want to throw in as well.

Your name – Put the name your contacts know you by.

What you do – Remember to include what you do or what defines your job scope. Include the organization you are currently attached to if you wish.

Contact information – Phone number, e-mail, work address, social media profiles etc.

QR Code – QR codes are a great way to visually present web addresses, phone numbers or vCards. There are plenty of free QR code generators on the Web to help you with this.

Saving your design

This is also an important part of the process, as you want to make sure all your hard work shows in the final product.

Make sure all text is embedded or outlined

Don't forget to remove any guidelines or colour scheme blocks

For best results, save your design as a vector based PDF, to ensure crisp lines and high print quality

Saving them in JPEG or PNG may result in fuzziness around edges and text

Case Study: Designing Business Card that Rocks!

Business cards are hard printed medium for spreading word about your business and what you do. These papers should truly stand the test of time and patience between those you offer services towards. Thus, their concepts should be fascinating and creative, stretching far from common people's imagination.

Likewise we are not all gifted artists in this trade. Whether you're freelancing alone or building a team business, cards will always influence your sales numbers. Consider some of the points I've raised below regarding modern card templates and how you can break out of the box. Such creativity isn't as difficult as implied by artists and merely requires a bit of stretched thinking.

Concept arts showcased below are geared towards the modern era of print layout. There are many styles and shapes to consider, so I also recommend spending time not only researching but building a collection of business cards to enhance your mind

patterns. Certainly if you've got further suggestions or ideas please do leave them in the comment section!

The Simple Pass-off

Regardless of the style and setting of your business card, we can extract the same conclusion from many different artists. Business cards shouldn't be created too extravagantly as they turn into burdens of annoying paper not worth anybody's time.

In fact, the whole purpose of exchanging cards with others is to allow for easy communication later on. The **pass off period** is how much time is required to hand out your business card and gauge your colleague's reaction. With more complicated and erratic structures it will be very difficult for clients to find a comfortable placement in their pockets.

(Image Source: Whiskey Design)

Consider sticking with shapes standard towards squares and rectangles. Objects which protrude outward can be fun and even evoke a state of playfulness. However this generally doesn't belong in modern business card design and can retract from your credibility.

Keep in mind how the receiver will feel taking a big hunk of cardboard paper from you. If they really wish to contact you it'd be simpler for them to find a secure placement somewhere in their personals, i.e. a wallet or purse. This ensures they can find it later and it wouldn't be sent through the washing machine by accident.

Confident Branding

You've got to push your company brand like nothing else. When it comes to passing around cards and word of mouth, nothing is more powerful than backup imagery and branding.

Notice fuzzy or embossed logos will stand out tremendously. Similarly adding holographic or shiny techniques over your logo gives your company the futuristic look. Every sleek businessman wants their cards to shine and this is one great technique.

(Image Source: <u>Card Gala</u>)

On a similar note you may create a letter branding or icon theme. This could be the first letter of your company, or possibly a similar logo such as Exxon's logo. Regardless the point is to repeat and create the illusion of a dynamic pattern. Small hole punches or background imagery will fit the bill perfectly.

In spite of how you approach branding, you should consider the outcome important towards marketing. A company icon or logo will generally supplement a longer title since the symbolism is easier to recognize. If you are truly lacking space on your card try fitting something into the back side, or even a light shading of background textures. Some very creative designers have showcased these exact techniques with precision and great imagination.

Highlights of Typography

For some time consider how powerful the role of typography plays on your business card. Anybody holding onto your piece of paper will surely be interested in the information printed. This means your contacts should be**legible** and **neatly spaced**!

I can't even begin to imagine how many cards offer poor-quality optics when comparing text. There have been many examples where background and text color barely contrast and almost blend together – quite a costly mistake. When clientele or possible leads

become frustrated they'll eventually give up, or best case scenario: google your brand and hopefully find a means of contact.

(Image Source: Card Gala)

Highlight different sections and see if you can draw attention into portions of your cards. The attentive bunch will pick up on simple techniques such as attracting eyes towards your company's website or personal e-mail address. No matter what your objectives as a businessman any new lead is always a great possibility for prosperous growth.

Clever Puns & Symbology

When you've got a company working in a specific sector of society it's simple to build clever puns with these. Often times this will come into fruition through clothing apparel and print companies, also handymen decorating cards with tools and clipart.

 (Image Source: Secret Agent Man)

Symbolism can play a key role in business card design. For a company such as Google it's all too common an occurrence to play around in their neck of the woods. Holding the elite position of *"Top Search Engine"* the employees of Google are able to play off such a historic role in society with comical imagery proportional to their home page.
The business card below is a prime example displaying the person's name inside the search field with contact information on the back.

If you've acquired a talented graphic designer or know your way around Photoshop it's entirely possible to blend symbology into your branding. If you can find a symbol or animal which represents your company, card design is often the best creative artboard for showcasing your ideas and getting your new branding afloat.

(Image Source: Vista-se)

Suspending User Interaction

One major point of interest towards card design comes from an aspect of human intervention. By adding neat effects it's simple to create interactive business cards which capture the imagination.

Your competitors will be ripe with envy while all of your clientele and corporate partners will be awestruck. There are many examples of this style, namely by Matt Imus in the photo below. You may notice not only the small slots of information open but there is a sliding inner piece which displays extra information.

This technique is just one of the many exciting renditions of interactive card design. Granted this isn't the only viable solution, and in fact is quite rare. You would need a strong press or somebody very knowledgeable about printingdual or triple layered cards.

In other examples interactive designers often display maps and even cards wrapped in packaging. These effects are very contemporary and will help you stand out from the crowd. Ensure you don't cross the line and go overboard, though, as your audience is probably finicky and wouldn't like to spend hours toying around with your cards.

Design Gallery

Throughout many of these tips it's difficult to fully grasp how business cards are created. The vast amounts of creativity required far exceed the mindset of many top graphic designers. I often find myself digging through internet archives for fantastic galleries of newer and modern card structures.

Below I've included over 25 business card examples for your viewing pleasure. These range from standard black-and-white letterpress to the exotic and almost inconceivable pieces. If you're struggling to come up with your own card design I recommend checking out our brief gallery below.
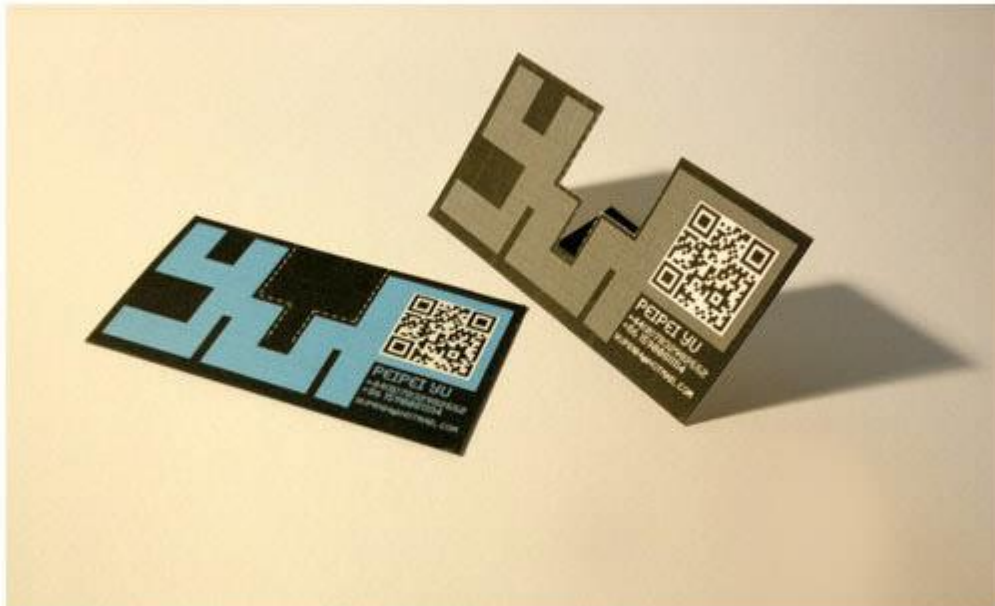
Reactor. *(Image Source: Cardonizer)*

Lisandro Enrique. *(Image Source: Lisandro Moises Enrique)*

Yup. *(Image Source: Peipei Yu)*

Ubiquitous. *(Image Source: Blush Publishing)*

Violett Chakakov. *(Image Source: Violet Tchalakov)*

Wilma Traldi. *(Image Source: Wilma Traldi)*

Amanda K Photography. *(Image Source: A Fine Press / Jane Johnson Design)*

Lou Fargeot. *(Image Source: Lou Fargoet)*

Top Funky. *(Image Source: Geoffrey Grosenbach)*

Sabrina Sorella. *(Image Source: <u>Stefanie Sosial</u>)*

Metallics Unlimited. *(Image Source: <u>Luice Design</u>)*

Design Nine. *(Image Source: DesignNineMedia)*

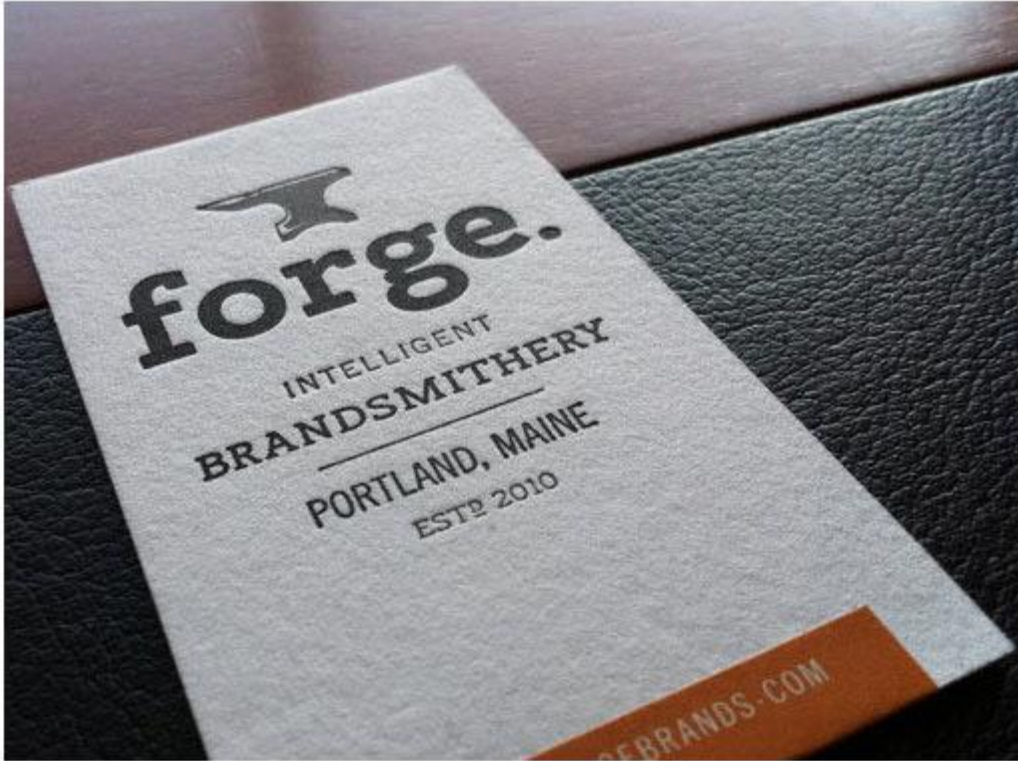**Nataliea Roberts**. *(Image Source: <u>Natalie Roberts</u>)*

Edouard Domenici. *(Image Source: <u>Edouard Domenici</u>)*

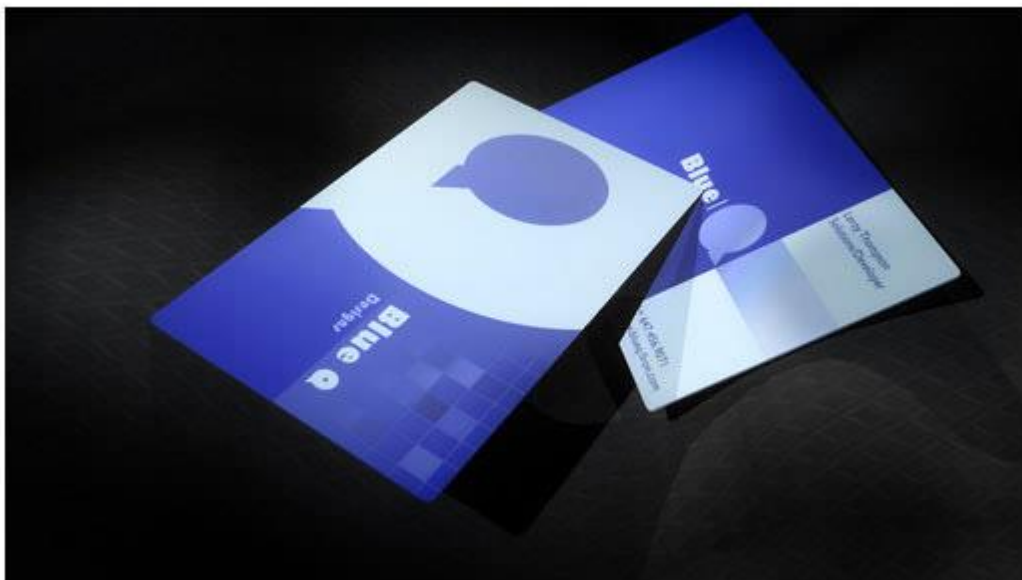**Marnie Gilder**. *(Image Source: [Domian Hamilton](#))*

Forge. *(Image Source: Forge)*

Klinetech. *(Image Source: Julie Hanan Design)*

Leroy T. *(Image Source: [BlueQ Desings)](#)*

CR. *(Image Source: CR)*

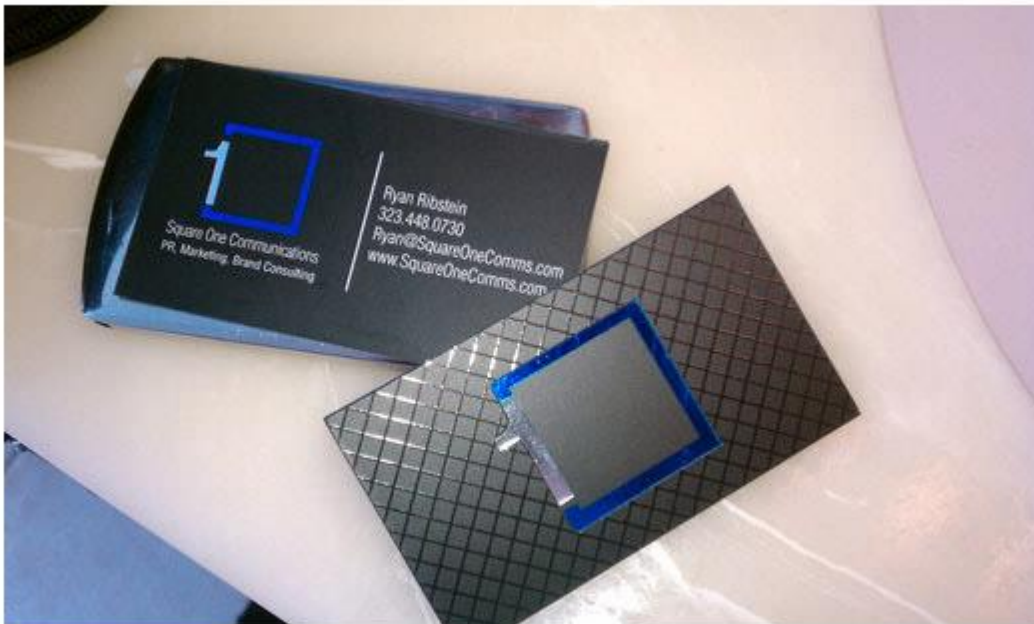

Rachel Russell. *(Image Source: Mark Cossey)*

Thomas Antiques . *(Image Source: [Stefan Irava](#))*

Jake Caputo. *(Image Source: Design Crumbs)*

Square One Communications. *(Image Source: Ryan Ribstein and Matt @ Luice Design)*

WOOOOOO!. *(Image Source: Woooooo! Design Team)*

Abby Doodles. *(Image Source: Abbydoodles Paperie)*

Duo. *(Image Source: Lisa & Ian)*

Anick Bauer. *(Image Source: [Anick Bauer](#))*

Jonny Campbell. *(Image Source: Jonny Campbell)*

Milky Interactive. *(Image Source: Olivier Pineda)*

Conclusion

Whether you are working solo or aspiring to construct your business kingdom, business card design will guide you along the path towards building reputation. It's difficult to break into any market these days without some form of physical presence.

In today's culture it's all about who you know. And the best way to increase who you know is through meet-n-greet with business cards! Never feel shy to offer your information or greet a new contact.

Spend some time browsing online galleries to come up with not only ideas but publishers who may create and print your cards. This process doesn't need to be difficult and can actually result in a very fun experience. Try brainstorming in a group with close friends to see just how articulate the process of creation manifests.