BUSINESS IDEAS

Six Common Mistakes to Avoid When Designing Your Business Card

(NAPSA)—Whether you're a business owner or simply looking to promote your own skills and interests, business cards are an essential networking tool. However, while a great business card can make you stand out, a poorly designed one could send the wrong message and hurt your business.

Given that the style and content of business cards have changed dramatically over the years, and people are incorporating more diverse layouts, colors and formats, how can you ensure that your card is top-notch, impressive and makes a positive impact?

The experts at Staples Copy & Print Centers have compiled a list of the top six design mistakes. These rules not only apply to business cards, but also to "social networking" cards used for personal communication, such as mini invites for a party or customized cards to promote a MySpace page, children's playgroup or to exchange information while dating.

#1: Overcrowding—This is usually caused by including too much information. The most essential pieces are your name and/or company, primary phone number and e-mail address. It's most important to maintain enough white space for a clean look.

#2: Too many images—Aside from your company logo, think carefully before inserting too many images and carefully consider whether the image fits with the rest of your card design.

#3: Too many fonts—Limit your card to no more than two fonts—a serif (each letter has a line that caps its top and bottom, such as Times New Roman) and a complementing sans-serif (smooth clean lines that aren't "capped," such as Arial).

When designing business cards, it's important to think about presentation as well as content.

#4: Unconventional shape— Designing your card in a nontraditional shape (such as a circle, triangle or square) might help it stand out, but could make it difficult for people to store and save.

#5: Too much color—The sky's the limit when it comes to color choices. Choose whatever bright, bold or muted colors best reflect your image, but keep in mind that too many colors in such a small space can distract from the information being presented.

#6: Not proofreading carefully—Always review your cards for spelling mistakes, errors and typos before they go to print, to avoid wasting time and money on fixing the mistake after the fact.

To help businesses and individuals create their own cards more conveniently and put these tips to use, Staples recently launched Business Cards in Minutes, a new service that makes it easy for customers to design, proof and print professional-quality business cards in as fast as 30 minutes. The technology lets customers design cards right at the counter and print as few as 100 cards at a time. To learn more, visit www.staples.com/copyandprint.