



NDSU Extension

Small Business Newsletter

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This newsletter is late. It seems when summer comes the days get shorter even though the sun is up longer. I hope to get back on track in July.

Till next time,
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The Business Card Remains Essential in the Online World

If you have been watching the NDSU Extension Facebook page, www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz, you may have noticed an article I reposted indicating that the written thank-you note still remains a good idea in today's electronic world.

This article, <http://www.openforum.com/articles/are-business-cards-dead>, similarly argues that the business card remain a necessary tool for the business owner. It has been and remains a key element in your marketing tool box. The article notes however that some of the information you should put on your card have changed:

New information that you need to include:

Social media contact information or "handles"

QR Codes – those funny looking things that sort of remind you of a UPC code.

Used with smart phones, they direct people directly to certain web sites.

No longer necessary

Fax numbers – Interesting suggestion. In my opinion you need to consider whether or not your fax remains an important part of your business. It seems like we were just getting those installed. However most of the time I now find myself scanning a document into a PDF and emailing it.

You will find some other helpful suggestions and reminders for your business card.

Data at Your Fingertips

Business owners and those looking to get into business need to have an on-going awareness of how their market changes. With enhanced Internet tools, it is getting easier to find the information you need. One of the latest tools is available from US Dept of Agriculture – The "Atlas of Rural and Small Town America." You can find it at:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/ruralatlas/atlas.htm#map>. Check it out. There is a lot of information available with just one or two clicks of your mouse button.

Free Online Tool from SBA Helps Small Businesses Develop an Export Business Plan

Perhaps you have never thought about exporting or, if you have, that it is something too big for your business to handle. Remember that 80% or more of the market is outside the United States. Consumers from other countries might be your precise niche market. So what can you do about it? The Small Business Administration is working to help you decide if exporting is for you and to help you get started if it is.

Small businesses interested in starting or expanding sales of their goods and services overseas have access to a new, free online tool that will gauge their readiness to export and help them develop an export business plan. The Export Business Planner, developed by the U.S. Small Business Administration, offers a ready-made, customizable and easily accessible document that can be updated and referenced continuously as the business grows.

The Planner, located at www.sba.gov/exportbusinessplanner, allows users to:

- Determine their export readiness
- Learn about training and counseling opportunities
- Complete worksheets for global market research
- Obtain financing information and options
- Customize export marketing plans, and
- Access resources for exporters

The tool is organized in comprehensive chapters that are cross-linked and indexed for efficiency and easy access to related topics.

The chapters include:

- Introduction to Exporting
- Training and Counseling
- Getting Started: Creating an Export Business Plan
- Developing your Marketing plan
- Financing your Export Venture
- Accounting Worksheets: Costing, Financial Forecasting and Product Pricing
- Utilizing Technology for successful Exporting
- Your New Marketing Plan: Summary, Timeline
- Updates, Transportation and Documentation

A special, very useful feature of the Planner is the customizable worksheets, which provide templates for developing your export business plan, conducting business assessments and foreign market research, creating your marketing plan, costing and sale projections, goal setting and much more.

Quote of the month

Success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go - William Feather

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