



THE BRANDED BUSINESS CARD TEST



Research from Yale, MIT, and Harvard has shown that weight, texture, and shape all can influence behavior and decisions. And marketing by using color is a powerful but underestimated way to connect with customers as well; think of how Tiffany's pale blue gift boxes help to drive sales.

So keeping these facts in mind, let's think about your business cards, which are nothing more than a tool to help sell yourself as a representative of your company's products and services.

What do the shape, weight, texture, and color of your business card say about your company? Take the Branded Business Card Test below to find out:

WEIGHT

Research led by Dr. John A. Bargh of Yale demonstrated how weight affects the way people behave. For example, Bargh found that interviewers holding heavy clipboards are likely to be taken more seriously by job applicants than those with lighter clipboards. You can apply these findings to business cards as well. People often equate quality with the heft of an object. Therefore, holding a heavier card will give a much different impression than holding a cheap, lightweight one.

Take out your business card. Is the material that your card is printed on thick or flimsy? Using a business card that is too thin can give prospective clients the impression that

you're not solid, firm, or professional enough. You don't want to give the impression through a flimsy card that you "fold easily."

TEXTURE

Bargh and his fellow researchers also found that texture has an impact on decision-making. They found that when people sat in hard chairs without cushions during price negotiations, they were less likely to compromise than those sitting on soft, well-cushioned chairs. Objects like coffee cups, pens, and business cards can also affect perception.

Keep this in mind as you notice the texture of your business card. Recognize that everything—from the kind of carpet in an office to the finishes of desktops and the fabric of curtains—can create a tactile experience and thus leave an emotional imprint with your customer. A sleek, simple texture for your card design may help to communicate efficiency and competence. Consider using a glossy finish if you want your card to stand out more—this can be a smart strategy, for example, if your business involves art or design.

SHAPE

Most business cards are rectangular, and if you're in a traditional industry like finance or law, it makes sense to stick with these expected standards. Yet more creative industries, such as advertising or architecture, can take advantage of the fact that shape, in addition to texture, can have a powerful effect on brand recognition, especially for tactile products like business cards.

Think about the shape of Coca-Cola bottles, which were a hit in part because of their curve that gives them a pleasant grip while conjuring up a smooth, flowing feeling that creates an identity. While you don't want to get too complicated, consider how your business card's shape might help contribute toward connecting your card with your brand in the minds of prospective clients.

COLOR

As the final part of the Branded Business Card Test, look



at the colors used on both the card stock and lettering of your business card. Certain colors trigger particular emotions in viewers, so it's important to choose your colors wisely.

Do you want your business to communicate a bold vision of strength and power? Red tones can help to accomplish this. But if your value proposition is more about helping consumers to unwind, green and blue palates can help reinforce feelings of serenity and relaxation. Soft yellows (paired with warm versions of red) can suggest the promise of all-natural ingredients.

There's no pass or fail to the Branded Business Card Test. Instead, you can use the insights you've reached by exploring the areas above to gain knowledge about what your business card says about your company. If you don't like the message you're sending to customers through your card, small modifications to weight, texture, shape, and color can all help refine how you represent your company through your branding expressions.