

OFFICE CULTURE -- Get carded, get job

Move over, white rectangle. JESSICA GRESKO finds new designs to make your card pop.

Published Thursday, December 07, 2006

By JESSICA GRESKO

Designer Todd St. John's business card is based on a New York City metro card. Real estate agent DeAnna Armijo appears on hers as a caricature of Dorothy from "The Wizard of Oz." And Bob Puleo tempts potential clients with a card that's combined with a box of hard candy.

Forget the traditional white rectangle. Today's business cards are more like art.

"How many of us have a stack of insurance cards or bank business cards? I think a neat little card gets people's attention," Puleo says. His brother, a cabinet maker, hands out wood cards.

These days, buying a business card is about as easy as making a copy. Online card printing site VistaPrint and supply store Office Depot sell 1,000 of the most basic cards for around \$12. But if a bland business card may get you tucked in a pocket, nontraditional cards aim to be unforgettable.

CARD AS ART

Mike Dorrian, a London designer and business card collector, compiled two books on innovative cards: "It is just like a tiny piece of canvas, isn't it?"

Dorrian's book, "Business Cards: The Art of Saying Hello," was published in 2004. A sequel, "Business Cards 2: More Ways of Saying Hello," was just published recently.

"Business cards were very classical 10 years ago. They all looked the same," Dorrian says. Today, technology has made die cutting or embossing cards less expensive.

Now there are odd-shaped cards, folding cards and cards made from plastic, aluminum and chocolate. There are cards with sticker labels on the back, lenticular cards -- which change from one picture to another -- and even pop-up cards.

Miniature CD cards, which came out several years ago, or magnetic cards seem almost old-fashioned.

"People are now starting to see that their business card is a marketing investment," says Christine Corbin, the owner of Canada-based World's Greatest Business Cards, which specializes in unusual cards. "That first impression _ that so crucial first impression _ is really aided by the different cards."

PRETTY FOR A PRICE

Corbin says her uniquely shaped cards seem especially popular in California. One recent customer, the owner of a bagel store, is having a card printed in the shape of his product. Another, a real estate agent, had a card printed whose front changes from a "for sale" sign to one that says "sold."

St. John, who has handed out metro cards since about 2001, says his card matches the feeling of his design studio, HunterGatherer. He wants to leave the impression: "That's so simple, why didn't I think of that?"

Armijo got her Dorothy cards from Show Off Cards, where a set costs \$499 for the first 1,000 with a Web site.

Alan Jones, the brother of Show Off Cards' creator Scott Jones, says he credits his unusual card with a positive reintroduction to an old client. When he went to leave his new card, the man came out to talk to him. They talked about the card, then family, and then work. Now he has the man's business again.

Innovative cards do have their downsides. They can be expensive for a person just starting out -- unusual cards made of

things like chocolate, leather and brass can cost \$2 or more per card. And they're not for everybody.

"I think if I was a tax attorney that wouldn't be the way to go," says St. John.

Diana Ratliff, who runs a Web site about business cards, says the cards should be well thought out and match the person or the business.

"Most people have seen TV commercials that struck them as funny or entertaining," she says, "but afterward they can't remember the product the commercial was promoting."

Card competition, from "American Psycho": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?vqoIvd3zzu4Y>

asap contributor Jessica Gresko is an AP reporter in Miami.

original article: http://www.wctrib.com/asap/index.cfm?page=asap_view&id=D8LS88GG1&forumcomm_check_return