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Taking Best Advantage of Your Aquatic Business Cards

Leland Yarger

Aquatic professionals have frequent contact with a wide range of people including customers, staff from other departments in their organization, professional colleagues, people their organization hires, or even casual acquaintances they make at meetings and conferences. With all these connections, there are many opportunities to market your aquatic program and yourself as an aquatic professional.

“Your business cards, you’re wasting space!” That was the response I received from Dr. James Sullivan at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, when I presented him with a copy of my business card. At first I was perplexed because Dr. Sullivan was looking at the blank back side of my business card. After some consideration, however, I realized that Dr. Sullivan was right, especially for aquatic professionals.

Aquatic professionals must earn and retain multiple certifications and qualifications as effective leaders. My predecessor at Ball State University, Paul Fawcett, often said “It’s not what you know, but what you are qualified to teach.” If you are an aquatic professional you know how true this is. For example, just as your lifeguard staff, you are required to meet standard-of-care criteria by holding and maintaining CPR, First Aid, AED, Oxygen Administration, and Lifeguard certifications. Generally speaking, most aquatic professionals conduct their own in-service training programs for staff to meet this requirement. To certify staff, the aquatic professional who leads a program must hold instructor-level certifications in all of these areas and sometimes more. The blank back side of your business card provides a convenient place to list all your credentials, thus allowing colleagues, managers, and other acquaintances to more easily recognize some of your talents, abilities, and hard-earned credentials.

During my aforementioned conversation with Dr. Sullivan he helped me realize that many people, including aquatic professionals, can benefit from using both sides of their business cards. On reflection, I realized that it is so obvious that I could not believe I had not thought of it myself. In retrospect, I should have thought of this simple innovation because, in my first aquatic position after my bachelor’s degree, I was working for the U.S. Department of Defense in Japan. My business cards had my contact information on the back in Japanese (see Figure 1). This “international” business card is very useful in bilingual communities. It helps your customers and other working contacts remember key information about you, your program, and your facility.

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Because our aquatic industry and profession often is poorly understood by much of the population (especially in academia and higher education), the information that you choose to display on your business card can educate, too. As aquatic professionals, lifeguarding is just a small part of our work involvement. Your business card can provide a broader picture of the many complexities of your professional responsibilities immediately.

In addition, the back of your business cards can have your photo to help reduce the possibility of identity theft. People you do business with can easily remember your contact with them weeks and months later by recognizing your photo. They will be more likely to remember your name the next time you meet at a conference or meeting. With your picture and qualifications on the back of your business card you might find yourself as the “go to” person for aquatics-related issues (see Figure 2).

The reverse side of your business cards can also be used for your business information, which might include

- Coupons or discounts when someone presents the card when they register for a program at your facility (but do remember to put an expiration date as needed)
- Maps of how to get to your facilities
- Recurring events that are held year after year (as long as the dates are the same)

Figure 1 — A bilingual business card.

Figure 2 — Add your photo and credentials to the back of your business card.

- General information such as facility and program hours of operation or available classes
- If you are in a multilingual setting, contact for services in that second language
- Other key services that your organization provides

Regardless of your primary discipline as an aquatic professional, using the reverse side of your business card as a marketing technique can help, in the following ways.

Beach-Patrol/Ocean-Rescue Lifeguards. These professionals have heavy customer contact through prevention activities on the beach. These guards can have business cards with their organization's contact information on one side and a copy of the warning system (sea condition/flag system) on the other. Printing on both sides of the card is a small added expense if it helps staff become better ambassadors to your patrons while keeping people safe and remembering your organization's special touch.

Aquatic Instructors. Instructors for your organization's aquatic programs often have the closest contact with your repeat customers. Giving double-sided business cards to each instructor with a coupon and serial number on the back allows you to track the accomplishments of and comments about your better or not-so-good instructors. This enables managers to identify instructors who might not enjoy their current assignments and to intervene before they lose any patrons and their concomitant revenue. The customers get better service, and you have employees better placed for the use of their talents.

Costs for double-sided printing on cards can vary with organizations and the type of business cards used. A major account might get 250 cards with single-side printing for \$10–15 per individual. Some vendors might charge close to double the cost for the second side, depending on the number of colors and detail involved. Others are not so expensive. Those with tight budgets can pick up blank business cards from office-supply stores that range from \$5 to \$20 for 250 cards. A simple inkjet printer can be used in most cases. The size of typical business-card-sized stock often corresponds to the Windows #5371 template. The only real cost is your time when it comes to designing, formatting, and creating the cards.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Sullivan, who recently retired from the Workforce Education and Development Department at SIU-C, for this idea and for his many years of helping students and colleagues. I hope everyone gets the great responses that I have received when I meet new people and they happen to notice the back of my business card.