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# **Stand Out In Business The Write Way**

When was the last time you received a handwritten note from a business associate? It may be that it was too long ago for you to remember. On the other hand, if you have gotten one lately, you know exactly who sent it and when. Handwritten notes have become almost extinct in the business world. So if you are looking for ways to stand from the crowd, to be noticed by your colleagues and clients, try putting pen to paper whenever you have the slightest excuse.

There are few acts more impressive than handwriting a letter or a note to someone with whom you do business or would like to. Most people think that writing notes by hand requires extra time and effort. Ironically, it can be quick and painless if you do it frequently and follow these tips:

1. Have writing supplies close at hand. Store stationery and stamps in the most convenient place in your desk. When you need to send a note, all you have to do is reach for your stationary, dash off a few lines, address the envelope, put the stamp in place and mail it.
2. Keep your message brief. These are notes so you only have to come up with three or four sentences. If you attempt to compose more than a few lines, writer's block is liable to set in and you will never get past "start."
3. Develop a system. Before you head out of the office to a business meal or function that someone else is hosting, address an envelop to your host. It will be a breeze to jot down your short message when you return.
4. Use the appropriate professional stationary. Both single-sided correspondence cards and fold-over notes with the company name or logo imprinted on them are business-like and will represent you and your organization well.
5. Poor penmanship is no excuse unless your handwriting is totally illegible. The person who receives your note will appreciate your thoughtfulness and will not be grading your handwriting. If your penmanship does not meet your standards, it is never too late to improve. There are numerous resources at your library or on the Internet to teach you to write legibly.
6. Use any occasion to get noticed with a note. A few of those instances are when...

You have received a gift  
You were a guest in someone's home  
You were hosted to a meal  
You received a business favor  
You are replying to an invitation  
You are sending condolences  
You want to offer congratulations  
You need to apologize

7. Make your message timely. Whether you are sending a note of appreciation, congratulation or condolence, do it as quickly as possible. A thank you should go out within 24 to 48 hours. However, don't forgo sending a note because you think too much time has elapsed. There is no definite statute of limitations on appreciation.

8. Understand that e-mail is not a substitute for the personal handwritten message. The Internet is fast, efficient and remote. If you are corresponding by e-mail immediately following a meeting with a business associate, include your expression of gratitude, but don't let that stop you from sending a second message by ground.

Successful people pay attention to the details and look for ways to build better business relationships. When you take the time to send handwritten notes, you will stand out from the crowd for all the right reasons. Your next big sale or job promotion may come about as a result of your doing business just a little differently.

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