

Finding the Gold in a Pile of Business Cards

By

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Do you have piles of business cards from other people? Maybe they are neatly arranged in a Rolodex, cardboard box or business card case or in small piles around your office, in your briefcase or in the pocket of the suit you wore to the last event. Hint: they aren't doing you any good there. But how do you take advantage of the gold that's in those piles?

The key is to develop a system that makes sense to you and that you can mine for information when you need it. So dedicate an hour or so and collect all your cards from various sources. As you go through them, put them into piles. I'm suggesting some categories below, but you may also come up with some of your own.

I-Don't-Know-Why-I-Have-This-Card Pile:

When you look at a card and you have no idea why you have it and you can't remember the face behind the card, it's time to dump it in the recycle bin. If it is someone you are meant to work with, they will come back into your life.

Referral Pile

These are people you have purchased goods or services from that you might recommend to other people or use again. By referring others, you build good will both with the person you referred and the person whom you referred. At some later date you might sub-categorize them into types of service, or just keep them in alphabetical order. It's important that it works for you.

Current Customer Pile

These are active customers who are using your goods and services. They are part of your gold in these piles. You want to keep these cards front and center in your mind, reaching out to these people on a regular basis.

Past Customer Pile

This is another part of the gold in your business cards. They used your services once; why didn't they come back? It might be a good question to ask. These past customers are also potential future customers. This stack should also be available to you on a frequent basis.

Prospects

Be careful that you don't confuse prospects and contacts. A prospect is someone with whom you've had more than one brief discussion. You've had several conversations and feel that they could definitely benefit from your services. This pile is also part of your gold -- people to keep checking in with regarding how they are doing.

Contacts

Everyone else is a contact. To keep your pipeline full, it's good to keep moving these folks from the contact pile to one of the other piles. Pick a few to check in with each week, sign them up for your newsletter or your blog feed. Remind them periodically that you are around and begin to develop a relationship with them.

So there you have it! A quick few hours work and you have turned business cards into gold. Rumpelstiltskin would be proud!