

Play your cards right



Make your foreign
business card a winner

Don't gamble on your first impression



In many cultures, your business card and the way you present it has even more of an impact than your appearance or the way you greet your foreign hosts. Once memories of your face and well-chosen words fade, your business card becomes all that is left of your identity.

One-sided cards vs. Two-sided

In most cases, a multilingual one-sided layout looks much better than a two-sided version. There are a number of advantages with one-sided layouts.

1. Notes can be taken on the back.
2. Embossing, color and logos are maintained. (They are often omitted when a card is two-sided)
3. Information is clearly visible at first glance.
4. Sometimes the layout of the translated side is stylistically inferior when compared to the “front” of the card.
5. Lower printing costs.

Occasionally, there is a legitimate need to develop a two-sided card (due to the amount of information it must convey, regional and US contact information, etc.).

Here's the deal

Consistency and branding are very important. Once the format is set, whether one-sided or two-sided, it must be consistently maintained throughout. Below is an example of a Russian/English, one-sided business card.



Russian – English, one sided layout

To help Russian business associates pronounce Mr. Pickard's name properly, his first and last name were transliterated into Cyrillic alphabet.

In Russia, as in some other countries, the middle initial represents a patronym (derived from the father's name). Therefore, it is best to eliminate middle names and initials.

Job title: "Secretary of Commerce" is translated as "Minister of Foreign Trade," the equivalent level of responsibility in Russia.

To assure proper mail delivery, the address is left in English.

To the left of the address, the following appears in Russian: "State of Pennsylvania, Ministry of Foreign Trade." This helps Russian readers to better understand where exactly Mr. Pickard works.

What's in a Name?



Names

- Last names are never translated, as they usually carry family history.
- Some first names are found in many cultures, e.g. Richard and Ricardo. If Richard is going to Spain, he may prefer to be called Ricardo.

Frequently, a businessman is an expatriate visiting his home country. It is up to him to decide if he wants to be called by his old-country name or his new Americanized equivalent. The matter is not trivial. For example, Gregory Chernoff projects an image of an American businessman (generous, fair, a bit provincial, etc.). The same individual may prefer to be called as he was called in the old country: Grigoriy Chernov (tough, street smart, takes no prisoners). You control the perception you wish to convey to others.

- Languages like Japanese, Chinese, Arabic and Russian use different alphabets and native speakers

of those languages may have problems reading names written in English. It is best that your name be transliterated in such a way that it can be pronounced in the target language. However, it is important to realize that due to diametrically different enunciation patterns your name will always be mispronounced to some degree in a foreign language.



Primary address

Secondary address

English – Chinese, one-sided layout

To avoid confusing Chinese readers, the initial ‘E’ is omitted in the transliteration of the name. Note that Mr. Haynes wants his Chinese associates to contact him at his Paris office, therefore his French telephone number and e-mail are clearly marked in Chinese.

Who’s the Boss?

The job title is the most perplexing element of a business card. Foreign businesses often will try to arrange meetings with people of similar status. They will pair a middle-manager with a middle-manager, a VP with a VP and so on. Unfortunately, titles are vague and the same title can have different meanings in different countries. In American companies, there can be any number of Vice

Presidents, but in many countries there can be only one. Consider the title *Secretary General*. Is this a secretary or a man in charge of the United Nations? Directly translated into a foreign language, you have two very different job descriptions. Now consider *Manager, Special Projects*. In most countries managers are assigned to specific departments and do specific things. Special Projects, in many cultures, would sound more like a secretive wing in a James Bond movie, not a business department. Vague business titles such as this must be “decoded,” to provide foreign businesses with a clearer picture of your responsibility and the nature of your business activity.

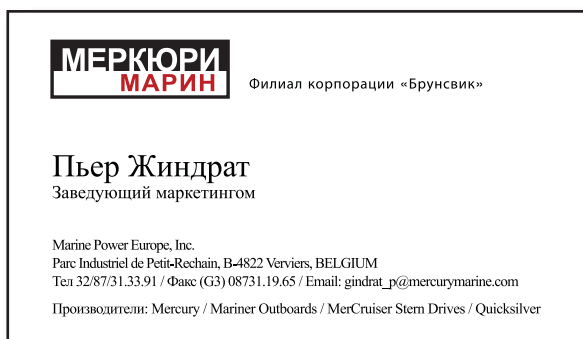


Since most foreigners are not able to address an envelope in Japanese, the address is written in Latin alphabet. Did you know that all Japanese mailmen can read Latin characters?

Company Name & Logo

As your products and your services become better known in international markets, you'll want people to recognize you by your logo or by hearing your company's name. Most people associate Caterpillar with big, yellow bulldozers, Coca-Cola with cold, non-alcoholic drinks, HP with great printers, McDonalds with hamburgers, etc., etc. Corporations invest heavily in establishing their corporate brand identity.

But what do you do about those countries that do not use the Latin alphabet? How do you make Russians or Chinese pronounce your corporate name correctly? On one hand you want to convey proper pronunciation and name recognition. On the other, you want to instill worldwide recognition of your corporate logo. So what's the solution? The most effective resolution is to provide transliteration in the target alphabet just below your corporate logo. Some companies go as far as developing foreign alphabet emulation of their logos (see below). This is appropriate for some products, but may not work for others.



As it is their corporate policy, Mercury Marine's business cards are two-sided. This Cyrillic emulation of Mercury's corporate logo has been specially developed for the Russian market.

Company Services/Motto

A company's motto or slogan is an expression of its corporate philosophy. It is an important element of corporate identity and therefore should not be written in English. HP's "Invent," Nike's "Just Do It," DuPont's "The Miracles of Science" are good examples of culture intensive mottos. Yet, translations of these mottos do not exist. They need to be localized. Localization picks up where translation stops. A localized motto will never render exactly the same meaning as it does in English.

However, it then must appeal to customers with a different cultural background.

Much like a logo, the company motto is an equally important element of branding and must remain consistent. Once a motto has been localized, it should not be changed casually.



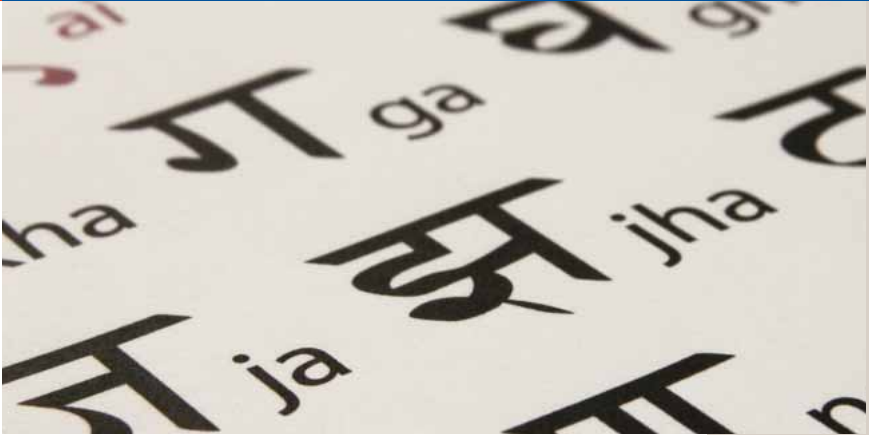
This card of an Italian dealership active in the European Union market provides translation of only the motto and the business title. Note that in Italian culture Amministratore Delegato (lit. Appointed Administrator) is the equivalent of a Managing Director in British English. However, in the US market his title would be more closely akin to a President or Executive VP.

Other Considerations

Addresses: Unless a company wishes to use its local office address, the address does not need to be translated.

Phone numbers: Most telephone symbols, such as Tel, Fax, and M (mobile – cell is strictly a North American term) are universally understood and therefore can be left as is. However, the phrase “within USA/ Canada” must be added to 800 numbers and country codes must precede all numbers.

So many words, so little space



Foreign vs. similar characters sets

If the target language is Latin based, such as French, Spanish or Polish, a one-sided business card could become multilingual by providing only the job title in the required languages.

谷理 葛理·查斯基
特別製造部經理
جريجوري زارتسكي
ГРИГОРИЙ И. ЗАРЕЦКИЙ
Заведующий отделом
Gregory Zaretsky
Manager, Special Projects
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Four language, one-sided layout

The Chinese, Arabic, and Russian translations provide proper pronunciation of Mr. Zaretsky's name. However his job title is 'different' in every language. Simple repetition of his American job title has little meaning as organizations are structured differently in various countries. As an additional benefit, multilingual business cards like this one convey to Mr. Zaretsky's foreign business associates the extent of his international travel.

Decisions, decisions...



Who said it was easy?

Here are some decisions that must be made globally for the entire company:

1. What not to translate? (Skip the information specifically developed for the US market, such as some services or a slogan such as: “IRS. We are on your side!”)
2. What format to choose: one-sided or two-sided?
3. Has the company name and logo been localized for the target market?
4. What about transliteration? Would they know how to pronounce your company name in China or Russia?
5. What about your motto, has it been localized? If so, provide it to your translation company in order to maintain brand consistency.
6. If you will decide to keep your 800 number on the card make sure it says “within USA/Canada” in the target language(s).

7. Check with your advertising department whether your company has *corporate business card and stationary standards*. If so, supply it to your translation company.

Individual preferences:

1. First name. To translate or not to translate? Do I want to be called Richard or would I rather be called Ryszard in Poland and Ricardo in Mexico.
2. Do I want our French office address, or our Chinese phone number listed along with my US address?
3. Be prepared to discuss your job title in detail with your translation company. This will include not only what you do, but also who you report to and how many people, in turn, report to you. A manager that reports to the company president is very different from a manager that reports to the director of projects.

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