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## GUIDELINES FOR SENDING BUSINESS CHRISTMAS CARDS

Whether you own a sole proprietorship or are the CEO of a Fortune 500 corporation, sending business Christmas cards can serve to boost your customer relations and ultimately improve your bottom line. About half of all businesses send holiday cards - sometimes with unintended negative consequences. Here are some guidelines to ensure that your thoughtful gesture will be interpreted in the best possible light.

### Selecting the Right Card

Every business has an image it portrays, whether through its logo, its branding efforts, or its marketing plan. The design of business holiday cards you select should reinforce that image. If, for example, you are a stockbroker, a Wall Street winter scene might be appropriate. On the other hand, if you are a pediatric dentist, more whimsical greeting cards are in order. For most businesses, an elegant and tasteful card is always appropriate.

When it comes to choosing a greeting card company, there are many online sources for business Christmas cards. Make sure to choose one that is well established and has a track record of satisfying customers. The best online greeting card companies will send you sample cards upon request, and offer personalization, free coordinating foil-lined envelopes, and printed envelopes.

When ordering business holiday cards, keep in mind that not everyone celebrates Christmas. A card expressing "season's greetings" or "warm holiday wishes" will prevent you from unintentionally offending those who aren't of the Christian faith.

### Sending Your Cards

In business, timing is everything. Although you have some leeway in sending business holiday cards, the rule of thumb is to send them between December 1 and December 15. If you're a business-to-business company, keep in mind that many businesses close or have reduced hours during the holiday season, so make sure that your card arrives in advance of the holidays.

In order to send your holiday cards out in a timely fashion, make sure to order them early. Personalized business Christmas cards can take a few weeks to produce, so try and place your order by mid-October.

### The Personalized Touch

The purpose of sending business greeting cards is to engender warm feelings in the recipient. That won't happen if your Christmas cards have address labels and are run through a postage meter. Expend the extra effort and have someone on your staff (who has nice handwriting) address the envelopes by hand. In addition, use a postage stamp instead of a meter when applying postage.

In the same vein, although you should have your cards printed with the company's name, the cards should also be signed by hand. The best approach is to have those who most closely work with the recipient sign the card by hand. If yours is a small enterprise, have a card signing party one afternoon, and have each person on your staff sign each card. This will go a long way towards making a positive impression on the recipient.

### Be a Gracious Recipient

There's little doubt that your company will also receive business holiday cards from your vendors and associates. Be a gracious recipient and display the cards in your workplace. It will not only bring a bit of holiday cheer to your office, but it will also please those who have sent a card to you and see it displayed.