

# Putting individuality back into business

The lost art of hand-written notes is on the rebound

by Linda M. Erbele

**Some Gwinnett businesses are** separating themselves from the competition by adding a human touch to high technology.

"It's been quite amazing," says Mark Treager, CEO of Outdoor Technology in Lilburn. Treager's company does interactive multimedia, Web site packages with streaming video and search engine optimization to help clients bring products to market. His personal tool? Handwritten notes mailed to each client.

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Topaz Garner of RyAms Business Gifts, also in Lilburn, sent her holiday catalog out to existing and potential customers on a business card sized CD. Her company provides trophies, awards and incentive gifts. The little CD was tucked into the flap of a card with her logo on it and a personal note to each individual.

The results were favorable. "I have to think it was the notes because that was the

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way it got noticed," Garner says. "People just toss aside mass mailings, but they open handwritten notes."

**In fact, Vanessa Lowry of Roswell has research that shows such notes have a 99 percent open rate. The founder of Profits in Progress, a firm specializing in the handwritten note, Lowry is a frequent speaker about networking at business meetings. She often asks listeners to think about their favorite note. "Not only are people who get them going to open them," she says, "they have a much higher retention rate for the**



Clients are more likely to read handwritten notes than mass-produced mailings.

**message. It's a key way to get yourself in front of people."**

Lowry has two favorite quotes about networking. She tells people "A current customer is nine times more likely to buy something from you than a person that has never bought from you before," – words gleaned from Warren Wechsler of Total Selling Systems.

From "The One Minute Millionaire" by Mark Victor Hansen and Robert G. Allen, she explains the rule of 250. "The average person knows at least 250 people. Then each of those 250 people knows 250 people. So instantly, you have access to 62,500 people."

Because all that writing would be overwhelming to most, Lowry started the company. "My idea is to help businesses present a professional image while building relationships with clients," she says. "For the cost of a cup of coffee at Starbucks," Profits in Progress will write and mail the notes or provide specially designed cards and ideas of what to write. The company's Note

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Working Success System has a money-back guarantee. There are specialized programs to help churches reach out, businesses motivate employees or salespeople keep in touch with clients.



Profits in Progress founder Vanessa Lowry helps people add the personal touch to networking with the help of handwritten notes.

Lowry preaches the gospel of the handwritten note to both clients and those who want to do it themselves. Her Web site [profitsinprogress.com](http://profitsinprogress.com) offers tips on what

to say and a timetable for completing holiday greetings. Last October, Profits in Progress organized 50 volunteers to write personal thank you notes to 2,000 people who helped with Katrina clean up.

Treager of Outdoor Technology wrote his own notes, and admits it wasn't easy. "I hadn't actually sat down and written a note in years. This forced me to learn how to write again. You have to stop and think about what you want to say." Fountain pens don't have a delete function. Treager is confident however, that it was worth the time.

"It's one of those intangibles in business that you can't put a price on but I know it grows and strengthens our relationship with clients." 