

# Last word

## Putting my cards on the table

Rob Garratt doesn't get why everyone needs a business card in Dubai

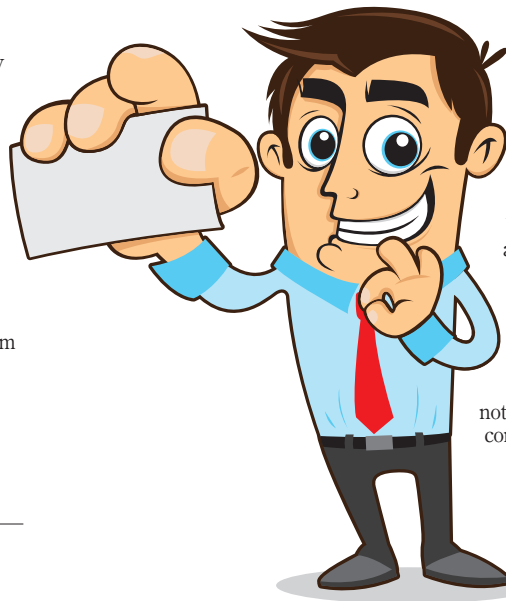
I realised Dubai was physically dependant on business cards as I walked through Media City one lazy Saturday. Strolling jovially through the sunshine, jumping kerbstones and skidding in sandpits as is the Dubai way, in the distance I noticed a couple of men reclining in the middle of a roundabout (it was grassed, but an odd location for a nap nonetheless). They weren't the most fashion-conscious chaps – by which I mean they weren't wearing shoes.

Yet at the sight of me, one of them leapt up like a Jack in the Box, and hopped over with an outstretched hand. 'Take my card!' he cried, imbued with some unfathomable passion. When I didn't immediately reach out and do as requested,

**It sometimes seems trading business cards has replaced the need for polite small talk**

I actually saw something akin to heartbreak in his eyes. Rubbing salt into the wound, I shuffled off sheepishly, a little confused. And then a sense of guilt descended...

But hang on, why would I take his card? I didn't know who he was or what business he was in, nor had I been presented with any legitimate reason why I should ever want to contact him again. I also questioned



conversation with a stranger in a bar queue and you can expect a card tactlessly declaring their social status artfully slipped between your outstretched dirham bills. I once woke up after a night out with a total of 11 business cards crumpled in my pocket, half of which belong to people I had no recollection of talking to (and that has nothing to do with beverages consumed, I might add).

It's clearly a Dubai thing. In a city of hopes, dreams, wild expectations and big money deals, identities linked directly to job titles is inevitable.

But I guess it's also a sign of the emirate's cosmopolitan vibrancy: with so many cultures and languages competing to be heard, the business card represents a universal platform to be understood, a tool for bridging divides and building relations. Maybe I should have taken Mr Shoeless's card after all.

*Rob Garratt is our Music & Nightlife Editor. He's quite proud of his own card with those words printed on it.*

this guy's priorities: at what point in Dubai's evolution did acquiring a business card become more important than purchasing a pair of shoes?

That situation might have been extreme, but it's really no different to the regular exchanges of cardboard I make in Dubai every day. It sometimes seems trading business cards has replaced the need for polite small talk altogether. While undeniably an invaluable professional tool, I resent the increasing intrusion business cards are making on my social affairs. Within moments of meeting a friend of a friend, the wallet has to come out before we can get to know one another. Strike up a

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