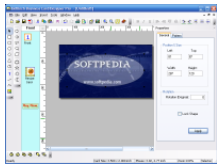


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By: Ionut Ilascu, Editor, Software Reviews



Promote Your Business in Style!

Business cards made easy.

Relationships (of any kind) are practically the glue that holds a society together and makes it live. A relationship is usually set via communication and not only. The easiest way to communicate is via language, but we all know that there are many levels of communication and the majority of people have no idea that communication can be achieved even when you do not talk to somebody. A teacher of mine once said that one impossible thing for a human to do is not to communicate. Just by standing near another person and not talking, you are in fact still communicating at some level. You actually communicate the fact that you do not want to communicate. But let's not get into NLP, that's not our purpose here. One way to achieve communication is to use business cards. They're small pieces of paper, but they transmit exactly the type of information you want. I actually see business cards as a very good means of advertising. In this respect, Belltech Systems developed a software designed to create business cards. It is pretty small (8.70MB) and the free version is shareware; the limitation is that the printed cards will be applied a stamp of the software. The full version costs \$29.95. The interface is not at all complicated and the bars are customizable, in the sense that you can move them anywhere on your desktop. The workspace is right in the middle of the application. In the left there are the back and front side buttons and the resize card option. Further in the left you'll find the drawing tools. In the right there is the Properties box. It will display the properties of the elements added to the business card. Depending on the element, the box will allow you to change the color, fill (for shapes), transparency, alignment, pattern and font. For most elements, the box has two tabs - General and Pattern - but for images there will also be the Image Edit tab, where you can adjust colors, apply effects and change geometry. Every one of these three options comes with a submenu. For Adjust color, the options are for brightness, contrast, color balance (red, green, blue), inverting color, converting to gray and making the picture black and white. You can play with the colors and make all sorts of combinations. All you have to do is drag a slide bar. In Apply Effects you can play with tools like blur, emboss, sharpen and solarize. The geometry changing option includes flipping the image horizontally or vertically. The fonts can be changed and also the style, size and color. The shapes pattern Properties Box contains options for changing the border color, width and style, fill shape with color or apply one of the 42 filling patterns and transparency of the pattern. The software comes with an impressive collection of over one hundred templates and fifty backgrounds. These are available in the File menu under New. Of course, the user can choose a blank document and build the business card from scratch. The cards can be sized according to the user's needs or amount of information. The scaling system is in inch, but do not worry, because they give you the inch/cm parity (in case you need to know right away, 1 inch = 2.54 cm). A much simple way is to go to the Options in Tools menu and change the measurement unit from imperial to metric. At the beginning I thought that the software will create only one side of the card and I was pretty disappointed, but you can customize both sides. The only thing is that you won't be able to see both sides at once. If you are not satisfied with the predefined templates and backgrounds, you can bring on your own images and create your own templates. The software supports .jpg, .png, .bmp, .gif, .wmf and .tif image formats. In order to insert your own picture inside a business card, go to Clip Art under Insert menu and browse for them. **The Good** The software is user-friendly and allows you to create in a very short period of time very nice looking business cards. If you are in a big hurry, you will lose time only with choosing a template and writing the text. The card can be resized both in imperial units and in metric units and you can make it as big or small as you want. The print

preview option in the File menu allows you to select the print sheet layout and in the right side there is displayed the layout preview. The best thing is that you can edit the print sheets so that they suit your needs. **The Bad**The Image Edit Properties is not as great as I expected, especially the blurring and sharpening tools, because they do not come equipped with a sliding bar. The undo option is limited to five and you cannot enlarge this number. The interface could need a little improvement. **The Truth**The software can save a lot of time and the results are pretty amazing if you have some patience. I think the price is great (\$29.95) considering that other similar products reach \$50. You can try it as long as you want because there is no limitation, but be careful with printing, as the software will leave its mark on the card. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*