

Creating Effective ID Badges

Introduction

Gone are the days of paper cards, photocopied images and ineffective lamination. PVC cards and ID badge printers, (such as the ID Maker One Box Systems sold by IDville) are the new standard in identification. Much like desktop inkjet printers, PVC card printer technology has become more and more accessible and cost effective, even for small business and schools. With one relatively small investment and a few minutes of your time, you can be on your way to creating beautiful and functional ID badges for your organization.

But what exactly makes a decent ID badge?...

Let us show you! This ebook will serve as your guide through the ID badge creation process. Taking you step by step through all the different aspects that make an effective ID badge design that is both attractive and functional.

Chapter 1: Backgrounds

A background, while visually striking, is probably the least important aspect of your badge from a purely technical stand-point. But as far as look and feel, it's one of the most impactful after a photo and logo. You could leave the badge with a stark, white, blank background... but what fun is that?

Let's break down some options:

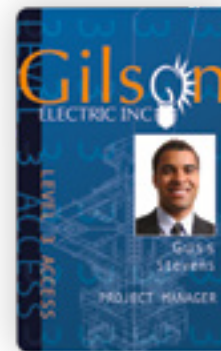
1. If your logo and photo are large, colorful, and fairly detailed then you might find it best to use a single solid color as your background. Try using one of your brand/organization colors to compliment your logo. To take that a step further, using the same brand color you can create a gradient (going from light to dark) across the background to add a bit more visual appeal over the solid color.
2. Another popular option is to use a photo of your facility. This can promote a sense a pride as well as act as an additional layer of security by tying the badge to your specific location.



3. You could also try using a larger, watermarked version of your logo spread across the entire background, further re-enforcing your brand.



4. Or you could go the more abstract route; using various lines, shapes and forms to create your own unique visual design. Experiment, try many different things, but most importantly of all - have fun!



The background is an effective way to make your ID look professional and pretty cool but remember, less is more. Going overboard can take away from the card's performance but adding a minimal design and including brand colors can make your ID cards something to be proud of.



Pro Tip:

Try changing the background color of your card while keeping the same overall design. Use this a quick visual indicator to differentiate departments, position, or security clearance!



Chapter 2: Photos

The photo is arguably the most important aspect of any badge. These photos make the ID unique to the individual and help to visually differentiate them from anyone else in the organization. As such it is essential that your photos are clear and distinct. It's not as hard as you might think, if you follow a few simple guidelines:

1. First, we suggested that you use a digital camera that is at least 2 mega-pixels in resolution, without wide-angle, fish-eye or other non-standard lenses. However, you don't need anything too fancy as the image file size is usually compressed to 1 megabyte.
2. Be sure to photograph all subjects in front of the same background in order to keep your photos consistent. Backgrounds are best when they are a single, solid color as textures or background environments can be distracting and detract from facial recognition on the final printed badge. White or gray is the most common. (ID Maker One Box Systems come with a two-sided backdrop that gives you the option of white or blue backgrounds!)
3. Position the person facing the camera, set at eye-level in a portrait orientation. Maintain a consistent distance from the camera for all photos, usually a distance of about 6 feet is adequate. Ensure that the entire face and head appear within the frame, roughly from shoulder height to the top of the head. (don't get too close, leave some white space around the head, you can always crop the photo later in the ID software). Aim for uniform facial illumination with minimal shadows.

4. Neutral light is best - avoid bright light sources, direct sunlight, or fluorescents. Students and employees should avoid wearing unnecessary head-gear or non-prescription glasses and make sure long hair is moved away from the face. Avoid extreme facial expressions, keeping the eyes open, mouth closed and a straight face or tasteful smile. Remember, these photos are representational of your organization and should reflect a professional appearance.



Once your photo is taken, save it as a JPG or PNG, label it properly and consistent (something like; organization_fullname.jpg) and save it to the proper location with all other vmployee photos for importing into the ID software.

Pro Tip:

Be wary of your shirt pattern, as patterns such as Tattersll and Gingham may not photograph and print well due to the complexity.



Chapter 3: Logos

Employee or student ID badges aren't just security. They also serve as marketing pieces and your logo functions as the 'face' of your organization. A visual indicator that identifies who you are and what you're all about. Adding a logo to your ID badge can create a sense of pride and loyalty among staff and students and build brand recognition amongst those who engage with your staff.

After the photo and personal details, the logo is the most important aspect of a secure and functional ID badge. It is recommended that your logo be bold and large so that it is clearly legible and visible from a distance. That being said, you should also avoid being too wild or distracting, using too many colors, gradients or filters.

The logo should be clearly readable, and refrain from competing with or obscuring other elements. In fact, we recommend that you leave approximately 1/8 inch of open space around the logo and avoid placing it too close to the edge of the card. Make sure that you keep the location and color of your logo consistent on all IDs (though one interesting exception would be to identify specific departments or security levels by using different color of logos – so long as the colors used are consistent with your brand and style guidelines).

Always be sure your logo and ID card design are consistent with your organization's current marketing style-guide, including; logo, colors and fonts to ensure that your IDs are properly projecting a professional image and reinforcing the brand's message. If you are unsure about your organization's style-guides, consult your Marketing or Graphic Design department for more information.



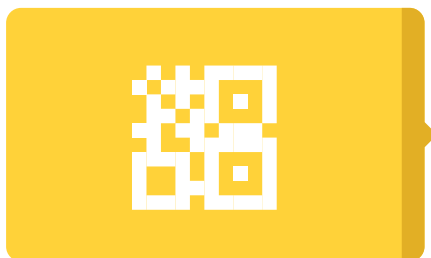
Chapter 4: Security & Data

We all know the feeling when we can't find our credit card. Heart pumping. Breathing stopped. It could be anywhere. These days security is fore-front in our collective conscious. Whether at work or school, identity authentication has become a regular part of our lives in order to protect ourselves, our organizations and our proprietary information. ID card printer systems offer a variety of security features ready for you to turn your office into a fortress.



Barcodes:

Possibly the easiest and most well-known ID security feature. Barcodes are a simple black and white graphic made up of rectangles used to encode data and information, usually numbers or a line of text. They can store up to 100 characters depending on what type you use which makes these good for URLs and ID numbers. Barcode encoding is a standard feature inside of ID Maker 3.0.



QR Codes:

The new player on the team. These are popularized on the web and common in modern consumer advertising due to their ease of use in being read by most of today's smart-phones. QR codes are similar to barcodes in that they are a black and white graphical representation of the encoded data (often depicted as a grid of black squares). However, QR codes are able to contain up to 2000 characters and can be read from any direction making them more effective and easy to use. As with barcode encoding, QR code creation is standard in our ID Maker 3.0 software.



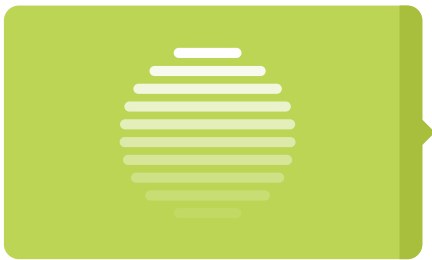
Magnetic-Stripe:

A programmable black or brown stripe on an ID card that when swept through a reader accesses loaded information such as an employee or student account number, name, purchase history, or other designated information. Magnetic stripes commonly hold up to 926 bits. Mag-stripe encoding must be programmed to your ID card printer prior to purchasing, but is a very common upgrade due to its widespread use. Information on magnetic stripes is susceptible to theft by magnetic readers so we always recommend using an RFID badge holder to protect against theft.



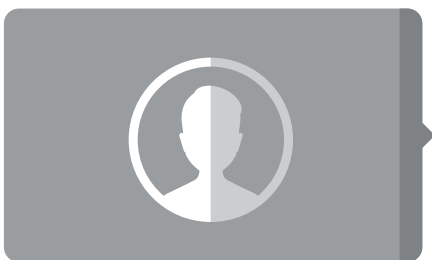
Smart Chips:

America is well on its way to wide spread adoption of smart cards for many instances, one of which being credit and debit cards. Europe and now North America utilize this technology due to its stronger security, durability and larger data storage, between 8,000 and 128,000 bits. The only con is that each card tends to be more expensive than a traditional mag-stripe card.



Holographic Overlays:

This unique feature can be used in a couple of ways. A custom holokote key can be programmed for your printer. When the custom key is inserted into the printer, it produces a holographic overlay that prints to the ID card. A gold foil square called a holopatch can also be printed on each card. The holopatch can be used to print anything, including your company logo, for added protection from forgery.



Watermark/Ghost Photo:

Another unique marking, most often an organization's logo, which lightly prints across any ID badge. Because this watermark is unique to your company, it makes unauthorized card duplication nearly impossible. You can also make an ID one-of-a-kind with a mirror screen image of your ID picture, usually smaller and located in the bottom corner of the ID card.



Fingerprinting:

Especially useful for government agencies and schools with child ID programs. An employee or student fingerprint can be included with the rest of their ID card information.



Chapter 5: Backside

ID Got Back! May as Well Use It.

Your standard ID card can include a lot of information, potentially even more than you realize! More often than not people tend to focus all their time and attention on the front of the card. Working to fit every last detail while also trying to keep it nice and professional – never even realizing the valuable real-estate available on the back side of the card! The ID card back is under-utilized space, but it doesn't have to be! With a dual-sided card, you can add important details to the back of the card that might otherwise not fit or detract from the layout of the front of your card.

“Whoa, wait... What?!”

Often people think that the back of the card is just for a mag-stripe or serial number, but its oh-so-much more! You can put anything there, seriously, like sky's the limit! (well as long it's something that you can print, but you get the picture)

“Ok, ok, I get it. But uh, can you give me examples?”



“Oh, you bet your low-fat, soy-milk latte I can!”

Ideas and Recommendations

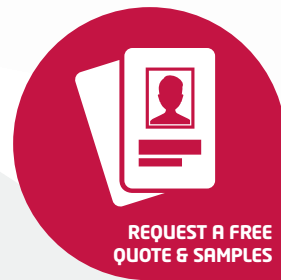
ID cards often incorporate QR codes, barcodes and fingerprints that allow them to access data and even unlock doors. You could move all these to the back of the card so the back is doing the majority of the actual work. That allows the designer to use the front of your ID to create a beautifully branded badge without all the bar codes and fingerprints while still providing you all the ID card features you need.

Bonus Point: When someone's identity is in question, including a copy of the authorized employee's signature or fingerprint on the back of the ID is an instant way to detect a fraudulent ID card or unauthorized visitors.

Beyond that there are other creative uses, such as a business address, contact information, mission-statement, core values and even a list of emergency guidelines and procedures.

Congrats!

You got through the whole thing and you're an ID card design Pro! Hopefully you have a good idea of what will best fit your organization. And if you're still stuck, check out our [Sample Card Library](#).



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