# vCard
# (Electronic Business Card Standard)

## What is vCard?

vCard (virtual information card) is an electronic business card standard being sponsored by the Internet Mail Consortium.  In contrast to ordinary business cards, which are paper or plastic cards with some text and graphics, vCards are files (with the extension `.vcf`) that contain contact information in rich multimedia format.  A vCard file includes contact information in the form of text, URLs, images, logos, audio clips for pronunciation, etc.

vCard aims to replace physical business cards.  Using vCard will save time and effort required to take the information on physical business cards and enter it into a contact manager or some personal information database.  Besides saving time and effort, the results will be accurate in that there will be no contact information transcription errors.  Applications supporting vCards will provide a mechanism for importing and exporting vCard files.

The vCard standard allows applications to exchange contact information automatically, provided they are running on devices that can communicate with each other, for example, Bluetooth enabled phones and PDAs, PDAs with infrared links, etc.  Some examples of vCard-enabled applications are email, voice mail, Web browsers, telephony applications, call centers, video conferencing, PDAs, and PIMs (personal information managers).

vCards are media and protocol independent.  When sent as part of the same data stream such as email, vCard content is delimited as follows:

```
BEGIN:VCARD
   ...
END:VCARD
```

The vCard standard provides facilities for specifying information such as:

o   Identification properties such as name, photograph, and birth date.
o   Addresses (home, work, international, postal, parcel, etc.) for delivery of letters and packages.

o   Telecommunication information such as telephone numbers (mobile, work, home, etc.), email, fax numbers, etc.
o   Organizational information such as title, company name, company logo, information about an assistant, etc.
o   Sound files, for example, a greeting sound file.
o   Personal home page URL.
o   Security information such as a public key.

Consider the following information in a contact manager:

```
Name:             Colin Vegas
E-Mail Address:   colinvegas@colinvegas.com
Mobile:           (908) 201-1234
Business Phone:   (908) 212-1234
Company Name:     University of Studies
Street Address:   23 South Street
City:             Summit
State:            NJ
Zip Code:         07901
Country:          United States of America
```

The vCard file (a text file) corresponding to the above information in the contact manager has the following content:

```
BEGIN:VCARD
VERSION:2.1
N:Vegas;Colin
FN:Colin Vegas
ORG:University of Studies
TITLE:Professor
TEL;WORK;VOICE:(908) 212-1234
TEL;CELL;VOICE:(908) 201-1234
ADR;WORK:;;23 South Street;Summit;NJ;07901;United States of America
EMAIL;PREF;INTERNET:colinvegas@colinvegas.com
END:VCARD
```

It is important to note that users will not be writing vCard files directly. They will enter their contact information in some application, such as Microsoft's Outlook, which can then be used to generate a vCard file (`.vcf` file).

A vCard file can be sent as an attachment or made the email signature. A vCard received via email can be easily added to an address book or to a contact manager.

## What are Some Advantages of vCard?

o   vCards can be used to automate exchange of contact information between a variety of devices with applications that support vCard.
o   The size of a vCard is typically small which means that vCards can be attached to emails.
o   When a vCard is received as part of an email, it takes very little effort to add the contact information to the recipient's address book
o   A vCard can be used to fill Web forms by just dragging and dropping the vCard on the Web form.

o   vCard has broad industry support.  Numerous companies are shipping vCard enabled products, for example, Microsoft, Netscape,  Palm, and Nokia.

## What Are Some vCard Issues?

o   Not all email readers support vCards at this time, but this problem will go away.

## Where Can I Find More Information About vCard?

o   vCard Standard (http://www.imc.org/pdi/).