

Marketing Minute ~ How can QR Codes grow your business?

Quick Response (or QR) Codes are the barcodes for the digital age. They convey more information than the barcodes you see at the grocery store. They can be scanned with smart phones and tablet computers to open a Web page, play a video, or even place a call. (See more about what they are in my article [What Are QR Codes?](#)) The technology has been around for years, but only recently has it been embraced by U.S. retailers and other companies looking for fresh ways to connect with customers. The number of QR scans recorded by the industry's leading code maker has soared to 2 million a month, which has doubled in the past year (2010) and up from 80,000 a month in 2009.

"Advertisers are regarding them as the hot-test new tool of mobile advertising," said Colin Gibbs, an analyst at research group GigaOm Pro. "They love QRs because they're cheap and easy to deploy, and can put them anywhere from print ads to the back of stadium seats."

How can you use them to help grow your business? You can use them for sharing, with a video or landing page, an entire eBook and even multiple pieces of content that share a common link. Sharing is how you build community, such as with Facebook. You can mobilize the scanners to take action, such as alternating special offers by simply linking your QR codes to new landing pages or combine them with email opt-ins to build your list. You can use QR codes to link to specific blog posts that have earned an abundance of activity.

You can maximize your effectiveness with QR codes by linking them to instructions, sources for replacement parts and service, directions to your business, valuable coupons and special offers, free mp3 downloads, customer feedback forms, even recommendations for complementary products and services.

The Home Depot recently launched its QR initiative where consumers are able to scan codes located on their website and/or on products around the store to receive product information, installation instructions, how-to-guides, videos and product reviews.

Even restaurants are using them, using WalkIN, a startup that allows consumers to scan a restaurant's QR code on their website to save a spot on the restaurant's waiting list. Restaurants are able to adjust wait times and manually add new guests to the list with an iOS or HTML5 app.

Many of the major airlines are now using 2D codes as digital boarding passes. It is anticipated that by the end of 2011, all carriers will be required to provide this service for international flights.

Even Lady GaGa has partnered with Starbucks for a promotion that's triggered by scanning QRs on signs in the coffee shops. Some trendy bars are putting them on drink glasses. And here is a really interesting way to use them—Levi Smith, owner of Jade Monkey Tattoo parlor in Phoenix, has been inking QR codes onto customers since early 2011. "If I want a tattoo memorial to my family, I don't want to devote a quarter of my body to listing my family members," Smith said. "You can put an incredible amount of information on the QR codes and save space."

So, in business, where can you use them? On your business card, brochures and other marketing materials, product tags and packaging, convention and event nametags, restaurant menus, event ticket stubs, point-of-sale receipts, or even the sides of trucks and trailers. The potential for QR Codes is limitless. What's most exciting is how they take what social media is doing well now, bringing people together with technology, and extending it to enhance the experience.

The next generation of barcodes will hold even more information, so much that an Internet connection will not even be necessary. The content will be effectively embedded in the code. Imagine scanning a digital code to manifest physical reality? It's amazing to consider where this can go. So, get started today, get one for your business and start QR marketing!

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