

Grab More Business Fast with Quick Response Codes

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Culture on the Go

We live in a mobile culture. Whether your customers are businesses or consumers, they are more likely to be in the car, in a restaurant, or out and about than they are at home or in the office. Mobile phones have become the de facto method of communication.

According to the 2011 Mobile Internet Attitudes Report from Antenna Software, one in five U.S. mobile phone owners uses the mobile Internet every day. According to On Device Research, 25% of U.S. mobile phone users are mobile only. In other words, they do not (or very rarely) use a desktop or laptop to access the Web.

Thus, smart marketers are taking their message mobile.

Why Mobile Marketing?

Mobile is the future of marketing. It affects every aspect of your customers' lives. More than 91% of U. S. consumers now have mobile phones, and many of those are smartphones. Already, many people live their entire business and personal lives on their phones. From coupon clipping to product research to social media, there's an app for that. Mobile gives you near immediate access to them — no matter where they are and what they are doing.

There are many ways to reach the mobile consumer, and there's no question that one of the ways quickly gaining the most traction is with QR Codes.

Mobile Phones and QR Codes

Whenever you talk about mobile phones, you have to talk about QR codes. These square barcodes are popping up everywhere, and when decoded by a smartphone direct its browser to a website or send the phone a text or image message (such as discount code).

QR codes are also showing up on everything from billboards to magazine advertisements and direct mail, even email. Build-your-own QR codes are free to add to your printed promotional materials, and when used right, offer significant value. If you're not actively incorporating custom QR codes into your marketing programs, you are missing a huge opportunity.

History of the QR Code

QR Codes (Quick Response Codes) are 2-dimensional bar codes that have actually been around since 1994 and that hold much more information than 1-dimensional bar codes such as the Universal Product Code (UPC). They also offer additional benefits including taking less space to print, built-in error correction and readability from any direction. Originally, QR codes were used by the auto parts industry for tracking parts/inventory but today, QR codes are utilized by diverse industries ranging from manufacturing to service companies. With the increased adoption of mobile phones, they are increasing in popularity in the United States.

Users and Uses

According to Internet Retailing magazine, a June 2011 study by comScore found that 14 million mobile users scanned a QR or bar code on their mobile device, with more than half of those users scanning codes at home, nearly 40 percent scanning codes in a retail store and 24 percent scanning grocery store codes. About 30 percent of that group had also scanned data while at work. Men ages 18 to 34 comprised 53 percent of QR code users.

How Do QR Codes Work?

Viewing QR codes is simple. Simply point your mobile phone camera toward the code, snap a picture, and the software, or QR code reader app, on your phone decodes the image. (On some phones, QR code readers come pre-installed. Others require you to download them.) Instantly, you are directed to a website or a landing page. Or you might be presented with a special coupon offer or see a special text message.

No need to write down anything or type in URLs by hand. Just stop, scan, and view.

Imagine the possibilities:

- A teenager is standing in front of a clothing store and sees a display promoting a hot new outfit. She takes a picture of the QR code on the window decal and accesses a coupon. She shows the cellphone screen at the cash register to obtain the discount.
- A man sitting on a train snaps a picture of a QR code on a billboard as he speeds by. He
 is taken to a website, where he can browse the information at his leisure throughout the
 ride.
- A woman snaps pictures of QR codes at the bottom of a magazine advertisement. Right then and there, she browses different styles, pricing, and sizing information of interest or relevance to her.

We've all heard the expression, "Strike while the iron is hot." Consumers' ability to respond at the very moment you pique their interest has tremendous value. QR code advertising enable consumers to respond at the very moment you catch their attention. It is no wonder that many case studies show QR codes increasing response rates. By making cellphones the response mechanism, you remove many of the barriers to response.

Ways to Use QR Codes

QR codes add value in more ways than just direct sales. Let's look at some of the ways these codes can be used.

Sharing contact information

We now have more ways than ever before for people to contact us. It could be by our phone number or email address. It could be through Twitter, LinkedIn, or Facebook. We may even have a blog and YouTube channel.

Rather than cramming all of that information onto your business card, sign, banner or vehicle graphic, simply embed it in a QR code. Viewers scan the printed QR code, and with the click of a button, they can save you as a contact in their phone or call you immediately at the moment when they realize they need your service.

Coupon codes and promotional offers

QR codes allow you to easily and immediately deliver digital coupons and promotional offers. For instance, QR code software such as QReate & Track lets you produce a QR code easily for each of your unique offers so you can track how each is performing. These codes may direct people to a website where they can redeem the coupon, for example, or present instructions on how to use the discount at a store.

Event promotion and calendar items

Imagine this . . . you walk into a conference and start reading the brochure that lists the day's events. For each event that intrigues you, instead of circling it on the brochure, you scan in its QR code. The details of that event are instantly added to your calendar. Likewise, you could scan a QR code on the sign outside a conference room to immediately access details about the presenter and topic before deciding whether to attend.

QR codes can help ensure that companies get the maximum return on investment and user interaction on printed collateral. Add QR codes to all of your websites, videos, blog posts, and registration forms. Restaurants are including them on menus. Universities are adding them to speed student access to information. The possibilities are endless.

Signage

From wayfinding directories to marketing, there of dozens of potential uses of QR codes on custom signs. Universities are printing QR codes on outdoor signage to speed student access to information. Real estate agents are using printed QR codes to link interested buyers instantly to property listings. And savvy tradeshow exhibitors are placing them on their custom trade show display materials as a convenient way for prospects to access additional details or participate in promotions.

Measurement and Tracking

Want to maximize success with QR code advertising? Track and measure your results. Software such as QReate & Track allows you to view the success of your efforts through real-time reporting dashboards, and track information including:

Number of scans: Easily find out how many people have scanned your QR codes.

Activity by the day: View when people are scanning your QR codes.

Activity by the hour: Track when people are reading your marketing collateral, or when they most often utilize outdoor signs.

Devices being used: Are people viewing the QR Code from an iPhone? A Blackberry? If so, which model? Knowing this information allows you to optimize the viewing experience.

Locations of people scanning your codes: See exactly where your marketing actually makes an impact.

Return on Investment (ROI): All marketing campaigns requires an investment in time and resources. By incorporating QR codes into your printed materials and driving people to trackable landing pages, companies can gauge their return on investment to better allocate marketing expenses.

Is QR Code Advertising on Your "To Do" List?

QR code advertising are one of the hottest applications in the marketing world today. For good reason. They are easy to create. Easy to print on signage and include in custom graphics. Easy to track.

Printed QR codes are an immediate response mechanism that catches consumers at the very moment of interest. Walking. Reading. Playing. Shopping. Traveling. QR codes take advantage of every opportunity in a big way.

What's not to love about QR codes? They cost little or nothing to add to your marketing collateral and can be easily printed on your custom sign. Once people are intrigued, QR codes help them take the next step.

If QR codes aren't on your marketing "to do" list, they should be.

Sources

Portions reprinted with permission from <u>interlinkONE</u>: "Mobile Marketing: Grabbing Consumers on the Go!" - Foley, John P. Jr. 2011 "Using QR Codes to Reach the Busy, Mobile Consumer" - Foley, John P. Jr. 2010

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