THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO QR CODES

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(spine) THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO QR CODES

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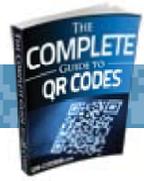This work may be freely distributed in the UK and USA.
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CHAPTER 1

Using QR Codes – An Introduction

QR codes have been gaining popularity among businesses for their marketing potential and among private users for their ease of use and for their ability to be read by any smartphone or tablet possessing a camera. Originally they were used for managing inventory, but today QR codes are used to store almost anything, including URLs, GPS coordinates, addresses, contact information, phone numbers, greetings, and simple text messages. QR codes provide an easy way to store and transfer information.

They originated in Asia before becoming popular in the United States and Europe. Smartphone cameras and a QR Code reader application are most commonly used to scan these codes. Some of today's smartphones come pre-equipped with QR code reader technology but most require the user to download and use an app.

QR codes can be displayed in many different places, like outside your business, on product packaging, on billboards, or in print advertisements. You can even embed a QR code in a television commercial. If you are using a URL link in your QR code, make sure that your URL for target response is a mobile site optimized for viewing on a mobile phone. Here are some more ways to use QR codes: http://qr-codes.com/best-examples-of-qr-code-usage/

You can even create your own custom QR codes to signify something about your business. For example, if you have a coffee shop, you could create a QR Code out of coffee beans.

It's important to be creative, but more important to link QR codes to sites that are friendly to mobile phones. Customers like to interact with QR codes, and they are a good choice if your target market uses smartphone technology.
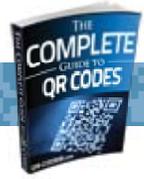
CHAPTER 2

Creating Your QR Code Campaign

Defining Your Objective

QR codes add value to traditional marketing methods, but only if the encoded information is valuable. Therefore, the first step in QR code marketing is to define the purpose behind your campaign. Some reasons for using QR technology include:

- Drive visitors to your mobile site or to your social marketing pages.
- Increase brand awareness and add value by giving users information or tips via multimedia.
- Deliver discounts or coupons or implement brand loyalty and reward point programs.
- Organically grow a mailing list by asking users to opt-in.

Whatever your objective, make sure to clearly state a call to action explaining the purpose of the QR code next to where it is printed. A catchphrase such as "scan this code to receive our offers" or "scan this code for your exclusive gifts" may inspire customers to scan the code and learn about your business. A code without any information next to it is not compelling and could be overlooked by customers who aren't very tech-savvy. Try using a single sentence to describe the value that your QR code offers and the action that needs to be taken. "Scan this code to like us on Facebook" or "Scan to receive a discount" are great calls to action because they ensure that the code's purpose and benefits are clear.

Creating Your Code

If you're going to use a free QR code generator, do a little research and choose the best quality software you can find. Code generators are only as good as the programmers that develop them, so be wary of new programs and test extensively. For a high quality and free QR code generator, go to this link:
http://qr-codes.com/qr-code-generator/

Mobile Demographics

As with any other form of marketing, understanding your audience through segmentation and demographics is key. Are they engaged on mobile social networks or email? Are they actively "checking in" to local hot spots or surfing the web? What kind of operating systems and mobile devices do a majority of them use? How often do they share video and pictures? These are all questions that, when taken into account, enhance your marketing plans. According to ComScore, there is a wide gap in demographics when it comes to those who share or engage in mobile social networks and those who simply spend time checking news, Google searches, email, and weather on their smartphones.

CHAPTER 3

QR Codes and Advertising

Mobile marketing is becoming a wonderful opportunity for businesses looking to increase brand awareness through mobile sites, mobile apps, mobile ads, and location-based services. Marketing is always evolving and now it is time to figure out how to transmit your brand message across this mobile medium.

QR code marketing has a bright future. For the first time in modern advertising history, customers have been the driving force in determining its usage – in effect, demanding a simple, one-step way to interact with a brand that isn't intrusive. To keep the QR code future bright, marketers have to provide an experience that is positive and enriching and listen to what consumers want. Imagine that: consumers that ask and brands that provide!

Advertising using QR codes requires some planning. Define the goals of your QR code advertising. Are you concerned with knowing how many visitors scanned and clicked the link you provided? Is you advertising designed to generate a direct response or continue to connect your brand with potential customers? Will your advertising be exclusively viewed by existing customers? Knowing what your advertising objective is will help you create a QR code designed with a specific purpose. Here are some ways to use QR codes as part of your advertising plans: http://qr-codes.com/5-innovative-ways-to-use-qr-codes/

No discussion of QR code marketing is complete without talking about mCommerce. Google Wallet and programs in development by PayPal, Visa and MasterCard are clearly predicting the future of mobile payments. Some have called the QR code scan the ultimate impulse buying tool, making it an imperative that it is easy to scan information about a product or service and buy in one simple step from the mobile landing page.

If you want to create a direct mail piece designed to create a response, you can create a QR code that has only your company name and phone number. Adding a message about a special promo and a link to the full details on the landing page may increase conversions even more.
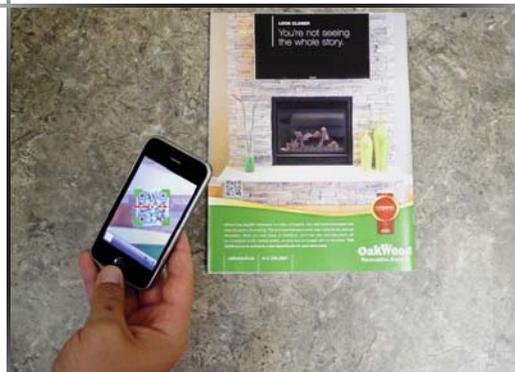
4

Incorporating
QR Codes into Your Brand

QR codes can be as creative and unique as your imagination and are a good opportunity to test different approaches. The QR code is a resource that must be implemented according to your brand message and stay cohesive with your business's existing branding.

Revamp Your Business Cards

It's tempting to put as much information as possible on your company business cards and brochures, but this usually leads to cluttered, unattractive materials that potential customers and clients toss because they don't want to wade through all that extraneous information. Instead, put the bare minimum on your cards. Remember, white space is just as important as text. The business name, employee name, and a phone number and address should be more than sufficient. If you want to include a list of products, alternative methods of contact, or a sales promo, simply add branded QR codes that link users to your company website.

Offer Special Discounts

Everyone enjoys feeling like they're a member of a group that has something special going for it. Offering special pricing, added perks, or unique opportunities via branded QR codes is a great way to generate interest in your products and create real buzz. You'll be surprised by how quickly discounts tied to QR codes can go viral, particularly if they can be shared socially. Don't pass up the opportunity to let your customers spread the word about your company for you.

Serve and Listen to Your Customers 24/7

Wouldn't it be great if your offices were open 24 hours a day, seven days a week? It's not practical to keep a bricks and mortar location open around the clock, but you can make sure you don't lose potential customers who show up during off hours. Be sure you prominently display a sign that says "Our Website is Always Open!" next to a QR code that will take people to your online store. You can pick up sales you would otherwise have missed even while you're asleep.

Give Customers Valuable Information

Not all branded QR codes are strictly for advertising or sales. If you sell a product that may need simple repairs down the road, a branded QR code can take customers directly to your customer service site. Simply attach a sticker to each product with a brief message and a QR code that will take users to a customer service website or a step-by-step guide for fixing the problem themselves. Does your business rely on plenty of repeat orders?
Create a QR code and web page that will let customers automatically reorder supplies. Here are some more ways to use QR codes to enhance your company's customer service: http://qr-codes.com/qr-codes-for-customer-service/

Contextually Sensitive Marketing with QR Codes

Advertising to customers when they are most needful of a product or service is called contextually sensitive marketing. QR reading apps are quick to launch and quick to scan with large storage capacity and fast readability. Because of this, they are ideal for embedding in contextually sensitive marketing campaigns, encouraging customers to link to your website and make a purchase that will immediately meet their needs.

Create a Campaign by Indicating your Objective

The process of creating a successful QR code campaign directly depends on the objective of your code. Start a brief analysis of the objective before creating your marketing campaign. You can use the code:

- To provide a link to a tutoring video or manual.

- To provide information about a brand and its services and/or products.

- To create awareness about product offers and sales.

- To deliver contact information like email addresses, phone numbers, addresses, social media channels, and web addresses.

Interacting with Customers Through QR Codes

Placing Your Code

One of the greatest things about QR codes is that they can be placed almost anywhere, including on advertising billboards, signage, printed material, websites, the sidewalk, buildings, vehicles and virtually any conceivable public space. There are even services to embed QR codes into gravestones leading to a memorial website!

When thinking about placement, understand that most QR codes are a form of hyperlinking, so they must be scanned in an area that offers wireless connectivity, i.e. mobile signal reception in order to deliver results. That is why some places like underground mass transit systems, some auditoriums and halls, and airplanes may not be the best locations for a QR Code campaign if it links to a website.

When you create your QR code, be sure to check it with a free scanner before you actually print in on a lot of products. Know that not all quick response code makers are created equal. For more tips on using QR codes go to this link: http://qr-codes.com/dos-and-donts-of-qr-codes/

Optimized Websites

When linking to a website, QR codes should always lead to a mobile-optimized landing page since most scans occur on smartphones. It seems logical, but it is surprising the vast numbers of companies who've posted a code on a mailer or national ad that links to a desktop website, a Flash-only site, or in some cases, even a dead link. User experience, needless to say, goes right out the window.

Metrics

QR codes are dynamic and redirectable. This makes a single permanent QR code in a prominent location a constant source of customer interaction. That's why metrics are important.

Metrics, or analytics, allow you to easily measure the success (or failure) of your campaign. If you find that customers are quickly leaving your site or not converting to sales after they scan your QR code, you can adjust the site and code until you get the results you desire. A quality analytics program is key to the success of your QR code campaign. Without it, you have no way to know which ads are successful and which are not.

Tracking results is paramount in QR code marketing, as it is in all forms of customer interaction. It is important to use separate tracking codes at different customer touch points. The QR code displayed inside a store may need to be wholly different than the one in the store's newspaper ad. Creating distinct QR codes and landing pages for each channel allows marketers to get immediate feedback on campaigns, deliver real time offers and to build databases of loyal customers. It's a winning combination of ongoing data acquisition and strong ROI. For help tracking your QR code campaigns, go here: http://qr-codes.com/qr-code-analytics/ or click on the image below.

CHAPTER

6 Practical Concerns When Creating QR Codes

Design vs. Scannability: A Fine Line

A huge challenge with QR codes is to balance design with scannability. Here are some tips to help keep your code scannable.

Building Design

We've covered quite a distance from the time when QR codes needed to be monochrome with a distinct checker-box look. Today's QR codes can be designed to fit the theme of virtually every marketing campaign. This is because QR codes can have up to 30 percent of their pattern obstructed and still be scanned successfully.

However, remember that a high level of graphical addition and improper placement can reduce the readability of your code. To solve this problem, keep testing your code and move its graphics around until you achieve optimum scannability while retaining a great looking QR code. Use our free QR code generator tool to experiment: http://qr-codes.com/qr-code-generator/

Scan Testing

Test your QR codes with multiple readers and devices. QR codes are an emerging technology and before you start printing them on everything conceivable make sure you test the scannability of your code on multiple mobile operating systems, most importantly Apple, Android and Blackberry. And make sure to test out several different code scanning apps as well. This is especially important when using highly stylized custom codes.

Contrast Matters

While designer codes can look great on your brand materials, make sure to use colors that create an effective contrast. Too little contrast can make the code indistinguishable from the background and will lead to poor scannability and reduced scan rates.

Be Size-Wise

QR codes need to be large enough to be easily read by mobile scanners. A code that's too small can have a serious impact on your campaign. When you're printing a QR code try to ensure that your code is at least 1 square inch in size, although 1.5 square inches is a far more readable option when using standard codes.

The Quiet Zone

When it comes to brand packaging, every available space tends to be filled with marketing material or general information. In order to make sure that your codes are scannable, you're going to have to leave a margin of uncluttered space around it that's devoid of text or graphics.

This constraint makes it important to incorporate your QR code ideas into your design layout right from the beginning rather than treating it as a last minute addition. Also, keep in mind that the quiet zone around your QR code needs to be a white or a light color.

Ditch the Gloss

Glossy materials tend to reflect a lot of light and can distort a QR code to the point where a scanner has difficulty reading it. If placing a code on a glazed surface (such as a magazine page or shiny packaging) is unavoidable, design the code to be substantially larger. This will overcome most of the scanning problems posed by the shiny patches of light on a gleaming surface. Folded pages can also render QR codes unreadable.

CHAPTER 7

Unique Uses for QR Codes

There are a number of ways to promote your business with QR codes, some common, some quirky. A custom code on a wristband could provide a free drink at your venue's bar or a discount on a ticket to a future event. A wristband with a QR code at a DJ night could send you to a mobile web page where playlists are constantly updated, so you don't forget the name of the song you liked so much. Trade organizations can put together scavenger hunts using QR codes for their conventions, incentivizing people to check out all booths or events. For an all-day conference, use quick response codes on your custom wristbands to link to a schedule or provide updates on the day's seminars and panels. For more innovative QR code marketing ideas, go to this link: http://qr-codes.com/innovative-marketing-with-qr-codes/

QR code technology allows you to get creative and engage with your audience in easy and exciting new ways. Plus, the technology is intriguing but not overly intrusive, and generates highly qualified leads or participants as the scanning is customer-initiated. On top of all that, jumping onto this trend now makes you a fairly early adopter of the technology, and the buzz from your organization's use of QR codes can be leveraged to promote your business.

QR codes entice people, but sometimes you have to be a little creative with where you place them and what you do with them.

1. Put them on merchandise, such as t-shirts and hats. This is a great way to take your codes on the move with you. People will scan QR codes on clothing, so be prepared if you should happen to be wearing a shirt or hat with a code – you may have a few people point their smartphones at you to see where your code leads them.

2. Use QR codes on stickers and give them out at events. A lot of companies hand out stickers with their business logo on it, but this is a much more interactive way to communicate with your customers. Print a QR Code on the sticker that directs people to your website or social accounts.

3. Put QR codes on sales tags for clothes or tangible goods to explain more about the product. This really helps when you are low on staff and don't want to lose customers. You can place little how-to scan cards on the counter or around the store, so people know how to read the codes.

4. Create a scavenger hunt for your customers. Applying the technology in an interactive way that pits members of your target audience against each other is not only fun, it's strategically brilliant. Designing unique scavenger hunts may take some imagination, but there is no better way to bring your audience directly to you than with destination marketing.

5. Use QR Codes as temporary tattoos. Customers and fans of your brand can wear QR code temporary tattoos to raise awareness of your company.

6. Put QR codes on business cards. By adding a QR code to your business card, you can make it easier and more convenient for your clients and customers to save your contact information into their smartphone.

7. Use QR codes to quickly scan wristbands at your next event. Different QR codes can be printed on each class of wristband, making it easy for your staff to quickly identify underage patrons or VIPs.

Remember that QR codes don't have to be black and white. Hire a designer to design custom codes or use our free QR code generator to add color and logos to your codes so that you stand out from the competition.

CHAPTER 8

The Future of QR Codes

With QR codes starting to pop up all over the place, what does the future hold for these unique marketing tools? Ingenuity and technology go hand-in-hand with this type of advertising, and it seems to be the wave of the future for advertisers and marketers.

Interesting Ways to Share Information

QR codes by bridge the gap between the print world and the digital world. The blending of these two powerful mediums is the wave of the future. QR codes can be placed on any kind of product and provide users with a chance to look at more information on their smartphones or other handheld internet-capable devices, such as the iPad or Xoom, than ever before. This technology is easy to use and engaging, making it an important part of any business's marketing plan.

For more information and a list of frequently asked questions about QR codes:
http://qr-codes.com/what-is-a-qr-code/frequently-asked-questions-about-qr-codes/

Scan to visit QR-Codes.com