

Medallion Fulfillment & Logistics

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QR Codes: The Future of Marketing

Make room for the next big thing – QR codes. What’s a QR code? It’s essentially a wacky looking, matrix barcode users scan with a camera-enabled smart phone. Scanning the QR code connects the user to a mobile-optimized web page, video or photographs or activates functions such as email, SMS and IM. The free QR codes are simple to produce, distribute and display.

[QR codes](#), also known as Quick Response codes, were invented in 1994 by a Toyota subsidiary, Denson-Wave. QR codes are well known in Japan and South Korea. Recently, QR codes have created a buzz among US marketing specialists. In the US, well known companies such as Macy’s, Best Buy and Post Cereals use them to enhance their marketing campaigns.

The Nielsen Company forecasts, by the end of 2011, more than half of all US citizens will own a phone capable of scanning QR codes. The user just needs to add a phone app. QR codes are appearing in major print publications, on buildings and storefronts. In the US, the demystification of QR codes has a ways to go but it won’t be too long before they’re immediately recognized, understood and scanned by US consumers of all ages, shapes and sizes.

Ways Your Business can Take Advantage of QR Codes

Savvy marketers use QR codes to drive customers to a specific web page. Simply placing a QR code in a print add is not enough. Grab the consumers’ attention with an enticing call-to-action statement placed next to the QR code. For example “scan for a great offer” or “scan to win a prize.” Don’t harm your brand with a disappointing offer or prize. If you do it right they’ll eagerly come back to your website. Something to think about: Why should the audience take the time to scan my code?

Americans like freebies. Entice consumers to complete your mobile-friendly survey with giveaways. What’s the objective? With their permission, gather their email addresses for additional marketing messages. Surveys can lead to sales.

- Provide additional company and product information with Quick Response codes on product packages and literature.
- Use QR codes in print ads to bring traffic to focused information on your website.
- QR codes linked to videos can help bring your products to life.

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- It's not common, but some companies design a QR code to automatically dial a predetermined telephone number. Before using this bold marketing technique, think about this: From the consumers' perspective, what's in it for me?
- Linking a QR code to a desirable coupon entices users to scan the code. The coupon is automatically saved on the users' mobile phone, providing the user an easy way to keep the coupon. They can also provide a copy to friends, aka consumers.
- [Quick Response codes](#) properly placed in retail stores make it easy for customers to sign up and become part of the store's social community.
- You can provide access to user manuals in an array of languages through a QR code link.

Where to Place QR Codes

QR codes can be printed on almost anything. Marketers incorporate QR codes with billboard ads, posters, in-store displays, business cards, contests, print ads, direct mail campaigns, coupons, email marketing etc.

For major events, put your QR codes on all your promotional material such as stickers, flyers, press kits, merchandise tags etc. Use a plug-and-play CMS to update the landing page throughout an event.

Create your own QR codes for free at websites such as at [Kaywa.com](#) and [rasoftwarefactory.com](#). Learn how to make attention grabbing, [attractive QR codes](#).

Analytics

Set up your QR code and the associated mobile webpage with analytics. Now you'll be able to follow and optimize your campaign. You'll learn how many scans a Quick Response code gained and how long the average user spends at your website. You can measure how advertisements containing QR codes are driving your sales.

Expand Your Social Media Audience

Design a QR code to connect directly to your company's Twitter stream or Facebook page - it provides users the opportunity to "follow" or "like your company."

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Near Field Communication (NFC)

[NFC](#) is a wireless communication technology which lets devices exchange data over distances of about ten centimeters. Google uses a mobile payment system, relying on NFC. Google stated they're "exploring new ways to enable customers to quickly and easily find information about local businesses from their mobile phones". Some experts in the field suggest Google will someday push businesses to use NFC for some of their communications.

For now, the QR code is the hot marketing tool. When used effectively, QR codes gain the attention of customers and produce sales. They also help your company maintain a modern image.

About the Author

Jan Stewart writes exclusively for [Medallion Fulfillment & Logistics](#), a family owned fulfillment service business located in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. When you need simple or comprehensive assistance with warehousing, order processing, and shipping for your store or e-commerce business, consider Medallion first. Visit them at www.MedallionEnterprises.com.