

## QR CODES: The Next Big Thing That's Here To Stay

It's easy to dismiss some of the new technology that just seems too complicated to wrap your head around. We make blind statements such as we don't need to know, that doesn't apply to my business or that will never last. Didn't they say that about the Internet?

In the last 5-7 years, websites and social media vehicles such as Twitter and Facebook have shifted marketing efforts away from outbound, or push, marketing to inbound marketing, where customers seek out your brand online and through word-of-mouth can build brands from the ground up, without a hefty marketing budget. The challenge for marketers has been finding a way to connect some of these "virtual world" experiences with what we can touch and feel. Experts feel that QR codes are the answer.

While many of you have heard of QR codes, we're finding that most businesses are unsure how to use them to their advantage, afraid of making mistakes until someone they know in their industry does it first. In a fast-paced, competitive world, innovation wins out through businesses willing to boldly take the lead. We hope this short introduction to this new technology will whet your appetite to want to learn more.

A Quick Response – QR code is a two-dimensional code that can be scanned by any Smartphone camera to automatically pull up videos, text, photos, music and URLs...wherever you want your customers to land. They are one more tool in your marketing arsenal that enables you to reach your customers and tell your story while connecting them to your brand in ways never before possible.



QR codes are starting to show up everywhere - on direct mail, brochures, business cards, magazine advertisements and even on billboards. These barcodes are an incredible new way to connect consumers directly to any Web location allowing you to show instructional or promotional videos, access a coupon, complete a product purchase or display additional information. Put them on your printed materials and you're showcasing your company as modern, knowledgeable and a leader in your field. Today, major brands such as Macy's, Best Buy, Target, Post Cereals, Ralph Lauren and others have found QR codes to be helpful in research, in addition to increasing sales.

With QR codes you can track the response to your marketing tactics and learn which ones are most effective. We've found it to be an exceptional vehicle for testing direct mail campaigns. QR codes will also be showcased in the next election as an addition to political mailings. Their

objective will be to drive voters to the candidate's website for additional information and to possibly make a donation.

Just as with any marketing effort, lack of a clearly thought out vision for their purpose has led to poor executions of QR codes. We found this to be the case over the summer when the United States Postal Service offered a discount for mailings that included QR codes. Many companies jumped on the bandwagon before thoroughly understanding the best use of the technology with their customer base. If you're still in the learning phase of how QR codes might work for your business, we've included some links below to articles you might find useful.

At MidAmerican Printing Systems, we're printing QR codes for direct mail pieces, tradeshow materials, convention signage, business cards and brochures. We are amazed at some of the applications these innovative marketers are trying, and we're continuing to learn about their immense potential.

Should any of you be interested in a seminar on QR codes and how to manage printed materials with these web applications, please let us know by emailing [jfreund@midamericanprint.com](mailto:jfreund@midamericanprint.com). If we get enough responses we will bring in some marketing gurus on the subject and display printed applications that you might find of interest.

#### ARTICLES YOU MIGHT FIND HELPFUL

##### 103 Ways to Use QR Codes to Drive Sales and More (Plus Two Bonus Tips)

<http://www.targetmarketingmag.com/aggregatedcontent/103-ways-use-qr-codes-drive-sales-more-plus-two-bonus-tips>

##### How To Engage the QR Code Prospect

<http://www.targetmarketingmag.com/article/how-engage-qr-code-prospect/1>

##### 13 Creative Ways to Use QR Codes for Marketing

<http://www.fastcompany.com/1720193/13-creative-ways-to-use-qr-codes-for-marketing>