

■ QR Codes

Have you seen these funny looking codes? They're everywhere these days. From dealer car windows to the Sunday paper's coupon section, QR codes are becoming the next big thing.



If you've been curious about these funny looking symbols, this newsletter will give you specific information about what these codes are and how they can help you as both a consumer and a business.

■ Tip of the Month

On-screen Keyboard

Keylogger programs that can capture your login credentials without your knowledge can be installed easily on public PCs such as in cafes or libraries. Be safe and use an on screen keyboard instead of a physical keyboard attached to the computer to thwart would-be thieves.

To use the On Screen Keyboard, left click the Windows Start button and select **All Programs - Accessories - Accessibility**, then click **On-Screen Keyboard**.

When the keyboard appears, navigate to the webpage you want to login to and put your cursor in the login box. Then use your mouse to select each character of your login credentials on the On Screen Keyboard dialog box. Your characters will automatically appear in the login box. Use the mouse to move to another box or use the tab key.

The On Screen Keyboard will stay visible so you can interact with both the keyboard and the webpage. When complete, just close the On Screen Keyboard box by clicking the X in the upper right corner or by choosing File - Exit.

What is a QR Code?

A QR code, short for Quick Response code, is a 2D bar code used for displaying additional information about a product or service. Whereas traditional bar codes like UPC symbols store basic information like price, size, model #, etc. QR codes can link to a website, dial a phone number or send a SMS (short message service) text message. Because of its breadth, a QR code can provide a wealth of information to the user.

Although QR codes have been around for nearly two decades, they have only become popular due to the ubiquitousness of mobile Internet access through the use of Smartphones.

How do they work?

QR codes are meant to be scanned with mobile Internet devices. Basically, you need a device with: 1) a camera, 2) ability to download apps, and 3) a data plan through your service provider. While a basic cell phone won't do, Smartphones and tablets are perfect for scanning QR codes.

The bar codes are quite simple to use – download a QR code reader app to your Smartphone or tablet (if one isn't already installed) and then point your device's camera at the code. Take a picture and once the device registers the code (which takes a few seconds), your phone will do one of three tasks embedded in the code; 1) open a website, 2) dial a phone number, or 3) send a text message. That's it - instant access for wherever you are and whenever you need it.

NOTE: As with any app you download or website you visit, be aware that your personal information can be shared with third parties. If you're concerned about companies tracking you, be sure to disable the sharing feature on your Smartphone or tablet. Likewise, be careful with the personal information you share while using your mobile device unless a secure connection has been established.

Where Can I Find QR Codes?

QR Codes can be small or large depending on their location and can be printed on a variety of substances. Here are some places where QR codes have begun showing up:

- Sunday paper circulars / newspapers
- Magazine advertisements
- Car dealer stickers on windows
- Wine bottles
- Clothing / Hats / Bracelets
- Product packaging - everything from electronics to food
- Movie posters / promotional materials
- Store windows
- Airplane boarding passes
- Sales receipts
- Bus shelters

QR codes are international so you'll see them while traveling abroad as well.

Business Ideas for QR Codes

The beauty of QR Codes is that anyone can create and edit them with free software. Because of this, businesses are jumping on board with QR Codes at a rapid pace. Since customer service reigns supreme in this economy, providing customers with 24/7 access and information makes good business sense.

Since QR codes are customizable and can be printed on many different mediums like paper, wood, plastic and glass, they open up thousands of marketing possibilities limited only by your imagination.

You can link a code directly to your company's home page or link to special pages created for individual codes. Keep in mind that people will be using a mobile device so your website should be optimized for smaller screens. Other codes can provide a phone number or send a text message to the recipient. There's no limit to the number of codes you can create and use or the number of places you can put them.

Where to Use QR Codes

- Business cards
- Store/business windows
- Newsletters
- T-shirts
- Promotional materials - stickers, pens, etc.
- Food product packaging
- Signs - vehicles, banners

Information to include in the QR Code

- Coupons / discounts
- Info about your business
- Contact information - phone, email
- Sign people up to your email subscriber list
- If you're selling retail goods, send users to a review site so they can comparison shop immediately and pick the best deal.
- Send people to any of your online accounts: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Yelp, Digg, Delicious and more.

Conclusion

As consumers, we all crave information especially when it comes time to buy something. We want to know how our selection stacks up against a similar product, if we're getting a good deal at the current store, and if we can get a discount by buying online or using a coupon. With QR codes, you can find out all of this quickly and more without running from store to store or booting up your computer to browse online.

For businesses, priority number one is getting your message out quickly and inexpensively. QR codes

allow both as they are free to create and are fully customizable so you can change your message as much and as often as you need.

QR codes can be helpful to both consumers and businesses. Try them out and let us know what you think!

Ready Net Go, Inc.

610-856-0990

www.readynetgo.net/newsletter.htm