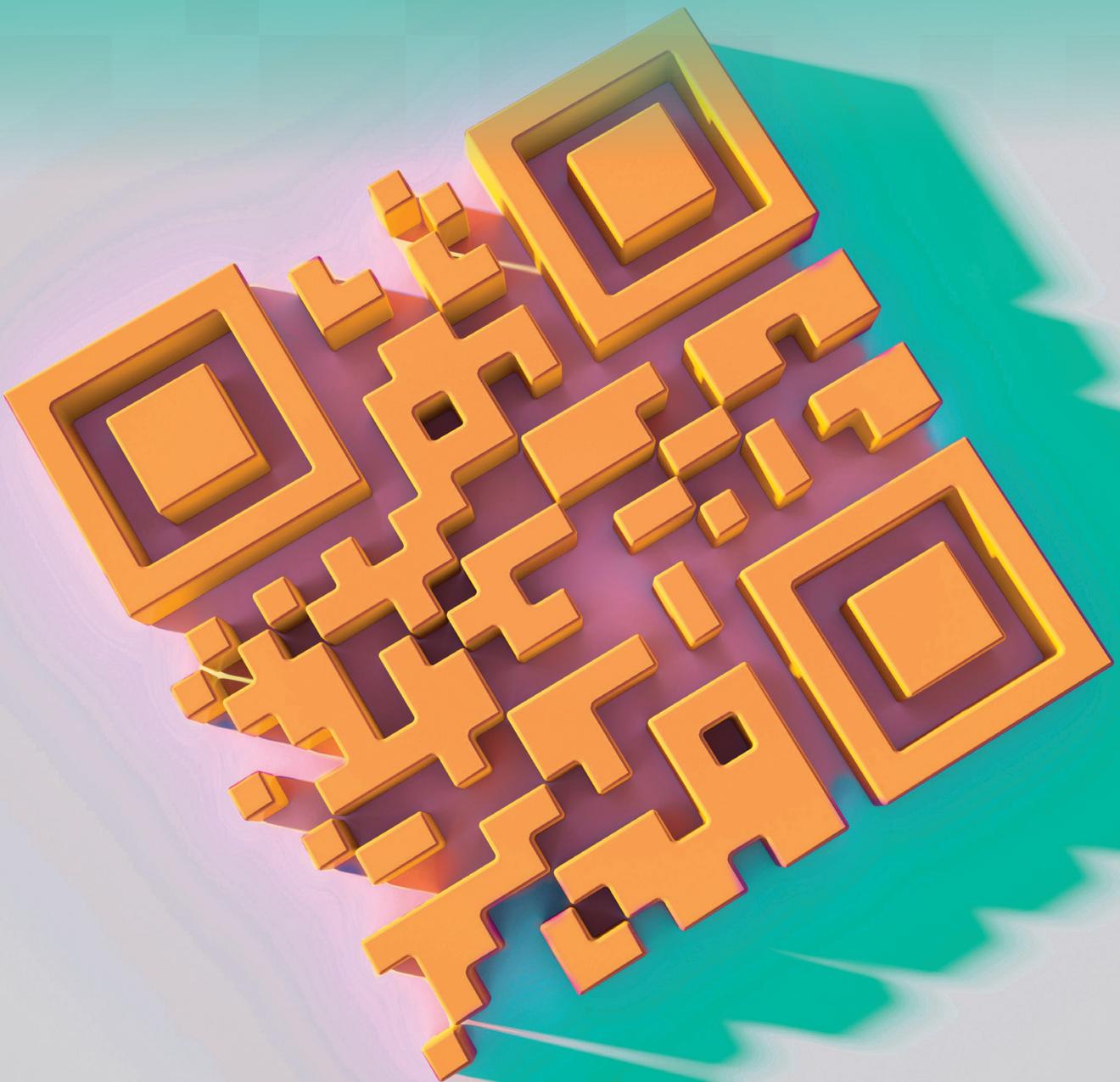


# THE RESURGENCE OF QR CODES



DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY!



Looking to provide your customers and prospects with a safe, easy way to connect to product or marketing information in a mobile environment? To allow a seamless multichannel experience from printed piece directly to the web?

**Think QR Codes.**

**QR Codes (or Quick Response Codes) are shortcuts to landing pages, discount coupons, videos, and other mobile content straight from printed (and digital) media. To use them, open the camera on most smartphones, point the camera at the code, and the camera's browser will recognize the code and take you directly there. What was once a static medium suddenly becomes a dynamic, interactive one.**



QR Codes look like checkerboards. Sometimes they are in color, but most often they are in black-and-white. You see them on direct mail pieces, magazine ads, in-store posters, and at the drive-through at McDonald's. They can also be added to digital channels like email, large screens, and e-books.

Here are some ways you might see QR Codes used:

- Real estate postcards, where they connect recipients to virtual tours of available homes.
- Table tents, where restaurant patrons can connect to interactive wine lists or pay for their meals right from the table.

- Food containers at movie theaters, where QR Codes encourage theatergoers to scan to access promotions and discounts on their next orders.
- Posters at public transit locations, where local businesses capture eyeballs while riders wait.
- On business cards, where people can add someone's contact information simply by scanning the QR Code on the front or back of the card.

The list of uses for QR Codes is endless.

#### Tested, Useful Technology

QR Codes have been around for many years, but with the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have started to see a resurgence. Businesses from retailers and events venues to local coffee bars have increased the use of QR Codes to provide easy, effective, and touchless ways to engage with their customers, and those benefits will last long after the pandemic is over.

While most mobile phones can scan QR Codes natively, phones with older browsers can access QR Codes by downloading a free QR Code reader. However, most phones today have QR Code reading capability built in.

Whether you are a retailer placing a magazine ad or a local business doing a sales promotion, the benefit of QR Codes is that they capture viewers at the very moment of interest. As soon as buyers' attention is piqued, they can act on the information right away. You don't lose eyeballs by asking people to manually input URLs or scribble them down onto



a piece of paper that might get lost.

Plus, QR Codes cost little or nothing to add to your printed pieces. There is no reason not to use them.

In today's world of social distancing and extra health precautions, QR Codes also say, "We care about your safety" by allowing shoppers and other viewers to access information without needing to have physical contact with the piece. Buyers gain access to your product, marketing, or company information in a safe and touchless way.



### They're Interactive

QR Codes are powerful from a marketing standpoint, too, because they make a printed piece interactive. Interactivity increases engagement and makes the information more likely to be remembered.

A good example comes from the food industry, where the use of QR Codes is exploding. Here are some of the ways QR Codes are being used:

- Provide access to recipes.
- Give buyers more information on ingredients.
- Provide access to coupons and discounts.
- Encourage customers to follow the brand on social media.
- Let shoppers learn more about the company (great for organic and mission-minded brands).

Increasingly, consumers want transparency about the companies from which they buy. For example, they care about where brands are sourcing their materials, how they are addressing the issues of sustainability and waste reduction, and how they are investing for social impact. QR Codes are terrific ways to tell that story and create positive feelings around your brand.

For example, one burger restaurant uses a QR Code to send customers to a video about the sourcing of its ingredients. Its call to action? "Our ingredients are hand picked from local



biologic farms. Watch this video to learn more about it." It's not what you'd expect on burger packaging . . . and that's the point.

Regardless of your industry, make those static printed pieces come to life. Add "live" product demos to sell sheets. Send trade show attendees right to a landing page created just for them. Let viewers "save the date" for your events right from your promotional mailers to their phones.

### They're Trackable

Wait! It gets better. Because QR Codes go straight to websites, they are an easy way to track the interest level of many of today's mobile consumers.

How many people scanned the code from the brochure you mailed out after the virtual trade show? Were mobile users more likely to respond to your promotion from the local newspaper or regional lifestyle magazine? Do people really pay attention to window clings?

Track these and more with QR Codes!

## Used by Top Brands

It is no wonder so many of today's top brands are using them. These include GMC, Ford, Google, Pepsi, Ralph Lauren, The Weather Channel, Best Buy, Chevrolet, Starbucks, Facebook, and countless more. Let's look at a few examples...



### Direct mail.

The real estate company Home Finders mails out postcards promoting homes for sale in buyers' local areas. It has added QR Codes to the mailers so that if home buyers like what they see, they can request a showing right from the postcard.



### Food packaging.

Spark Cinemas uses QR Codes to boost a key profit center in its theaters: concessions. One of the ways it does this is to add a code with the call to action, "Scan the QR Code to Get 50% Off Your Next Order" right on the popcorn box.



### Windows.

Businesses are awakening to a powerful but overlooked marketing channel — their own windows. By adding text,

images, and QR Codes to their street-facing glass, they can engage shoppers before they even enter the store. Ciao Pizza, for example, added a QR Code to its window art that encouraged customers to scan the code to be taken to their social media pages. Below the code it says, "Scan the Code to Follow Us for Deals & Offers!"

### Nonprofit mail.

When Samaritan's Purse wanted to promote Operation Christmas Child, which provides Christmas presents to needy children all over the world, it added a QR Code to its direct mail envelopes. The QR Code connected to a video clip showing distribution of the boxes, beaming faces of the children, and the benefits of the program.



### Menus.

Lots of hands touch restaurant menus every day, so The Grand Hotel Suites and Resort added a QR Code to the front of its menu — using the tagline "From your phone to our kitchen" — to provide a safe and contactless way for patrons to view their dining choices.



## Creating QR Codes

Although there are some common applications, you can use QR Codes for almost anything. The creative possibilities are endless, and creating QR Codes couldn't be easier. Although there are proprietary applications, basic QR Codes are free and easy to create.

Just Google "free QR Code generator," and you'll come up with a myriad options. Go to the site, input the URL to which you would like the code to point, and hit "generate code." You'll get back a .png or .jpg image that you can insert into your layouts.

Yes, it's that easy.

Using more complex software, you can also create personalized QR Codes (say for generating personalized URLs), codes with embedded logos, or codes that provide detailed tracking and multi-channel integration. Some QR Codes are "smart codes" that can customize the content based on the date, location, and model of phone that is reading it.



Is it time to update your marketing materials by adding QR Codes? Talk to us about where they can help to accomplish your marketing goals and where they can boost sales, increase audience engagement, and improve your customer experience.

## Best Practices for QR Codes:



### MAKE THE CODES EASY TO READ

Keep the URLs simple. The longer the URL, the more dense and hard to read the code becomes. Make the code easier for phones to read by using a URL shortener like TinyURL or Bitly. Also make sure there is enough space in the layout around the code so it's not crowded by text or images. If you're going to be placing QR Codes in permanent locations, think about things like reflections or shadows that might impact readability.

### MAKE IT SERVE A PURPOSE

Not only should the code be worth decoding, but it should serve a specific marketing goal. What is the intent on the back end? Gather information? Conduct a survey? Get buyers to make a purchase? Know your target audience and make sure the content is well matched to their needs and interests.

### MAKE THE QR CODE WORTH DECODING

Make the code worth decoding. Don't just send people to your website. Provide interesting, relevant content. If you are selling something, send buyers directly to a product-specific landing page with promotions specific to that code, for example, or send them to review sites or fan pages. Make it worth their time.

### OPTIMIZE FOR MOBILE SITES

Because people will be scanning these codes with mobile cameras, make sure the content to which you are driving them is optimized for mobile viewing.

### INCLUDE INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE CODE.

Although QR Code use and awareness is growing, you may want to include short instructions for using the code for those who are unfamiliar with them. Part of success with QR Codes is user education.

### INCLUDE MULTIPLE PATHS TO RESPONSE

Although you want people to use the code, include multiple paths to the information. Not everyone will scan the code, so make sure they can access the information other ways. After all, it's not about getting prospective buyers to respond to a code. It's about getting them to respond period.

### TEST, TEST, TEST.

Test QR Codes before deploying them and make sure the code points to the right site, that your content is up to date, and that your users will have a positive experience on the back end.

## Try Scanning QR Codes Now!

*Download a reader to your smartphone  
and scan these QR codes.*



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