



## Marketer's Primer Series: QR Codes & Other 2D Codes

### SECTION 1: HOW QR CODES WORK

What are QR codes? “QR” (or quick response) codes are two-dimensional codes very similar to those you see printed on your mail or on products in the store. Instead of looking like a series of bars like postal and UPC codes, however, they are square and use a series of smaller squares or other patterns to create attractive puzzle-like images.

QR codes can be “read” by many different types of devices, but the focus is on cellphones. Consumers simply snap a picture of the code and access a discount code, view a video, or are directed to a website where they can interact with the brand by doing things like shopping, viewing images or videos, playing games, or entering a sweepstakes.

QR codes can even be created to send people to their own personalized URLs (for more on personalized URLs, see the companion primer “Personalized URLs: Beyond the Hype”).



Image source: interlink ONE

In their most basic form, these codes have been around for years. But their use for marketing has been growing the fastest in Europe and Japan. Now their use is now exploding in the United States.



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### SECTION 2: QR CODES IN MARKETING

From a marketing perspective, what's the big deal about QR codes? Why is their use literally exploding all around the world? Let's take a look at just a few of the reasons.

#### Marketing benefits of QR codes

##### 1. QR codes are free.

In their most basic form, QR codes are free to generate and cost nothing extra to print. Just add them to your materials like any other image.

##### 2. QR codes provide an immediate response mechanism.

As soon as an advertisement or marketing pitch catches their eye, consumers snap and view. There is no delay between the interest and the response. This eliminates the drop in response rates that comes when people are required to type in URLs by hand or write down information on a piece of paper. Think of QR codes as the marketing equivalent of an impulse buy at the retail store.

##### 3. They capitalize on today's mobile culture.

Today's cellphone has been described as today's laptop. People's entire lives are stored on their phones, from contacts to family photos. The cellphone is the one device that is with people all the time.

A jogger is running in Central Park and sees a QR code on a billboard of interest. She stops, snaps the code, which is stored on her phone for later, and continues running. While at a friend's backyard BBQ, a teen sees a jewel case for a new album by his favorite band. By snapping the QR code on the back, he is instantly directed to a mobile version of the album where he can listen to audio clips, can purchase tracks from the album, or buy tickets to the tour. He can even access links that automatically Tweet the information or post it on his Facebook account.

##### 4. They are highly trackable.

Not only are QR codes trackable themselves, but they provide tracking for other types of media such as billboards or magazine advertisements that are not otherwise trackable. Because QR codes can be set up to record the type of phone used to read the code, they also give you passalong information. With the proper back-end tracking, the code can be printed on a direct mail piece, and if five different people access it, the advertiser will know it.



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### SECTION 3: TOP QR CODE APPLICATIONS

How can QR codes be used? What are the most common and successful applications? Since QR codes are, for the most part, shortcuts to websites, asking this question is a bit like asking how the Internet itself is being used. They are so versatile that it's difficult to categorize them.

Still, let's try. We'll list them here, then go into more detail with case studies in the next section.

#### Marketing collateral

QR codes provide an immediate response and tracking mechanism for all types of printed media, from marketing collateral to billboards. Marketers might send recipients to specific offers, sweepstakes, or coupons. Real estate agents might send prospects to pages with mobile-optimized videos and 360-degree views of key properties.



Image source interlink ONE



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### SECTION 4: QR CODE CASE STUDIES

If you do an online search for “QR code case studies,” you’ll find a lot of examples of how marketers, including large brand marketers, are using QR codes. But these aren’t really case studies in the sense that they don’t provide the kind of detail (or metrics) that allow someone to really understand how these campaigns work or how successful they are.

In this section, we’ll look at a few true case studies using QR codes, along with conclusions that can be drawn from them. Then we’ll provide a list of just some of many more excellent examples available that illustrate how these codes are being used well.

#### Letterbox Deals Direct Mailer

Image source: Insqrite

This case study comes from the blog of Insqrite, a real-time analytics platform. One of its clients, Letterbox Deals, a premium quality coupon catalog, used QR codes to launch its first print catalog in the Sydney, Australia, market.

The campaign objective was to build awareness of the Letterbox Deals brand by giving away Dell notebook computers. Recipients had the opportunity to enter a competition either by website or QR code. The results?



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### Section 5: Best Practices for QR Codes

Like any marketing technology or application, QR codes work best when certain best practices are followed. Let's look at a few of them.

#### Optimize for mobile sites

Because people will be snapping these codes on mobile cameras, you may want to make sure the content to which you are driving them is optimized for mobile viewing. Mobile phones will vary in screen size, screen format, ability to support client side scripting, and ability to support various image formats.

It's true that many of today's newer phones make viewing traditional websites easier than ever, but not everyone has one of these phones. Not everyone has a data-heavy Internet plan, either.

#### Make the codes easy to read

Although QR codes can still function with some data loss, you want to increase your chances of readability. Here are some tips.

##### 1. Keep the URLs simple.

BeeTagg recommends keeping them 60 characters or less. One way to do this is to use URL shortening like TinyURL.

▶ <http://www.mapquest.com/maps?city=Wilmington&state=MA&address=21+Concord+St&zipcode=01887-2131&country=US&latitude=42.55982&longitude=-71.151149&geocode=ADDRESS>



▶ <http://QR2.it/Go/12570>

