

## Is There a Future for QR Codes?

At a trade show a couple years ago, I used my iPhone to scan a QR code to enter a contest for a private micro-brewery tour. To my surprise, I won and my friends and I had a fantastic (albeit tipsy) time. It was a big trade show... Was I lucky? I suspect, in reality, that I was the only person to scan the QR code to enter.

### You may already be asking “What IS a QR code?”

A QR (Quick Response) code is a square barcode made up of small black blocks arranged against a white background. When scanned, a QR code can link a user to a web page, a YouTube video, a Facebook page, an email address or phone number. Touted by many marketers as one of the ‘next big things’ in mobile marketing, QR codes can be found on everything from billboards to bananas and *yikes*, even on gravestones!

There are some interesting examples of QR codes in action. Take TD Bank for instance: A TD Bank bus shelter poster campaign asked viewers to scan their QR code to be directed to the nearest branch offering Sunday banking. Nestlé announced last year that they were beginning to put QR codes on all their products, worldwide. Consumers who scan the QR code on a Nestlé product will have access to broader product information and recipe ideas.

### To be effective, a QR code **MUST**:

**Link users to something valuable.** To scan a QR code, a user must pull out their mobile device, unlock it, open their scanner application (assuming they have one already on their device) and scan the code. If you are linking a user to your website, be sure you are linking to a MOBILE-optimized one. If QR codes don’t make a user’s experience easier and provide them with information or a service they can actually use, you are only wasting their time, and yours.

**Be thoughtfully located.** Though they fly in the face of common sense, QR codes still appear in subway stations with negligible internet signals and on highway billboards. In order to be effective, they must be placed where users have the time and opportunity to notice and safely scan them.

**Include a call-to-action.** “*Scan to be connected with a customer service representative*” or “*Scan to view our latest promotion*” will garner more response than a code squeezed onto the bottom of an advertisement that links to just another advertisement.



**Be tested.** Before sending your pamphlets to the printer or printing a code on your promotional items, test samples to make sure they can be easily and effectively scanned from a variety of devices.

**Some ideas for where you can place QR codes:**

**Business cards** - To add your contact information into a users address book without having to type in all the details, to dial your phone number or to link to your blog.

**Marketing materials** - To direct a user to product showcase videos, dial a direct line to your sales department or link potential customers to your online store.

**Products and packaging** - To link to assembly videos, product reviews, technical specifications, manuals or to the product registration page of your mobile website.

**Outdoor signage** - To provide a direct line to your sales department, download a savings coupon or show a user your location on Google Maps.

Though QR codes are hardly new, debate continues amongst marketers as to whether or not they have a future. There does seem to be consensus on one thing - like the TD and Nestlé examples, there are some very handy applications for QR codes but most businesses use them ineffectively.

What do you think of QR codes? Are you using QR codes in your business and have they been successful? Email me at [allyson@fastfence.ca](mailto:allyson@fastfence.ca).

**Sources:**

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of QR codes?**

**Email me!**