

## QR Codes Are Free Marketing!

You may have seen or heard about QR codes, but weren't sure how they worked, what they were for and how they could benefit your small business. QR codes stand for "Quick Response" codes and are a matrix barcode similar to a barcode that's on most every retail product these days, but holds much more data and information. Bar codes hold up to 20 digits, but QR codes are 2-D matrices that can hold thousands of letters and numbers of data.

Smart phones – whether iPhone, Android or Google branded devices - read QR codes and use the data to access a mobile website, mobile offer or other digital content. Companies and small businesses are using QR codes to link to sign up pages for mobile text lists, mobile coupon offers and mobile app downloads or contest pages on mobile websites or to send people to their Facebook page or to a mobile app or other download site.

QR codes have been used effectively for over a decade in Japan – their country of origin – by many different types of businesses. QR codes differ from other aspects of mobile marketing because they need to be placed somewhere that they can be easily scanned by mobile devices.

QR codes are perfect marketing tools for small businesses because they are free to create and use. Some of the places that businesses use QR codes are:



- On marketing materials like flyers and brochures – these can link to a specific page on your mobile website or a specific offer
- On business cards – on the front if there's room, if not on the back – and links to a specific offer or opt-in page
- On sales receipts – offering a discount on the next purchase when customers opt-in to your email text list or other promotion
- On restaurant menus – particularly take-out menus – that can link to a page where people can order takeout or delivery on the go
- On vehicles – your company car, personal car, cars of friends and family – that link to your mobile website or a mobile opt-in offer
- On flyers – posting flyers on phone poles, bulletin boards or car windshields with codes that link to offers
- On packaging – these can link to information pages about the products or instant coupons to encourage purchase

QR codes are time savers because they allow your customers and potential customers to have instant access to your company's mobile website, text opt-in page or mobile offers while on the go with a quick snap. Busy people won't call a number and they may forget your website url, but they appreciate the

instant gratification of clicking and getting information and access they want – when they want it and are in the mood to receive your message.

Because they cost virtually nothing to implement, there's no reason not to try to integrate QR codes into every small business marketing strategy. QR codes are exciting, because there's really no limit to what you can offer to your customers and potential customers using this low-cost flexible marketing tool.

