

PressLines

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Tag, you're it!

Microsoft Tags, QR Codes Change the Marketing Game

Connecting the print and digital worlds has long been a dream of multichannel marketers. Some tools came along like personalized URLs (pURLs) that helped, but they still required typing the link into a computer or other digital device with Internet access. Then, Microsoft Tags and QR Codes appeared, which allowed instant access to mobile sites, simply by using your smartphone camera to take a picture of the barcode.

About QR Codes and Microsoft Tags

A QR Code is a matrix code (or two-dimensional barcode) created by Japanese corporation Denso-Wave in 1994. The "QR" is derived from "Quick Response," as the creator intended the code to allow its contents to be decoded at high speed. Now the QR Code has advanced to become the Asian standard code for mobile tagging. In Japan, QR Codes are tagged 50 million times daily, where they are commonly used for commercial tracking, logistics, inventory control and advertising. Now, QR Codes are beginning to catch on in the U.S. as mobile smartphone usage grows.

Microsoft Tags are relatively new alternatives to QR Codes. First launched in Beta a few years ago as a competing mobile barcode technology, Microsoft Tags are getting lots of use. In fact, Microsoft says more than one billion Tags have been

printed by people and businesses worldwide.

Why might you choose a Microsoft Tag over a QR Code? Here are the reasons Microsoft advances:

More Size Flexibility. Where space is precious – like on a printed page or business card – you can print a Microsoft Tag in a much smaller area than QR Codes. And the size

of the Tag is the same regardless of the length of your URL or message.

Ability to Create Custom Tags. A Microsoft Tag doesn't lock you into a single look. You can fully integrate your brand's personality into the Tag, creating colorful, visually exciting codes that don't distract from your message, but enhance it.

Single Solution for Reliable Mobile Tagging. QR codes carry with them a wide and potentially confusing range and number of different code scanners and don't always work consistently with all major operating systems. Microsoft Tags work reliably across Windows Mobile, J2ME, iPhone, Blackberry, Android and Symbian S60 phones.

Accommodates Mobile Phone Camera Limitations. Not all cameras are created equal, so Microsoft Tag ►

Get the Latest "Tips" Book

We recently expanded our popular "Tips" series with a new edition on digital storefronts. Storefronts are becoming popular – even essential – because they establish a custom-branded Internet presence that provides anytime, anywhere web sales and services to you and your authorized or anonymous users. A storefront is ideal for serving a distributed sales force, dealers, distributors, retailers, channel partners or even end customers.

But, getting your storefront off to a good start is essential, and our Tips book provides lots of vital information to help you take advantage of this exciting new tool. Request a copy of *Digital Storefront Tips* at sales@riponprinters.com or scan this QR Code with your smartphone to request the Tips book.



technology was designed specifically to deal with the limitations of mobile phone cameras. Microsoft claims Tags can deliver an accurate scan even with a blurred shot, low-quality lens or lack of camera auto-focus.

Advanced Analytics. QR and other two-dimensional barcodes have problems accessing details like how many times they're scanned and who scanned them. Tags, on the other hand, let you know exactly how, when and where your Tags are being used. They also let you change the content behind them with the click of a button.

Market Application

Before you decide whether to use a QR Code or a Microsoft Tag, the first order of business is whether you should use them at all. They aren't for everyone.

First of all, you need to know a little about your market. While mobile Internet browsing is growing, not everyone does it. Nor does everyone have a properly-equipped mobile phone. A 2010 report from market analyst comScore indicates that of the 234 million Americans using mobile devices, nearly a third (31.9 percent) used mobile for browsing. The percentage increases each year, but you clearly can't depend on reaching everyone with a QR Code or Microsoft Tag.

In general, the younger your target audience trends, the better. For example, younger mobile phone users in the 18-24 age category tend to access the Internet from their phones at a much higher rate than older age groups.

So what are some good applications for QR Codes and Microsoft Tags? Here are a few examples:

Catalogers can add one next to every product, launching the reader to either more detailed product information, perhaps a video product demo or a personal testimonial.

Ripon's Multichannel Services QR Codes Microsoft Tags Personalized URLs (pURLs) Email Blasts Digital Storefronts

Book publishers can make their books come alive with everything from user-generated commentary to maps, photos, audio and video annotating the paper version. Or perhaps a poster in the bookstore connecting a potential purchaser to an overview from the author.

Realtors can connect passers-by to a virtual tour of a home from the "For Sale" sign in the front yard.

Magazine publishers can offer anything from a video of the most challenging waterways that might complement a kayaking story, to a fashion show supporting an article on spring apparel trends.

Organizations of all types can create business cards that instantly connect prospects to the company website or to an introductory video of the representative or the organization (think non-profits, especially).

Newspapers can ask a "question of the day" in the print version and let readers see the answer by scanning the QR Code. Or they can link to correct answers to the day's crossword puzzle or to expanded box scores in the sports section.

Advertisers can include one on their publication ads to instantly link readers to an electronic coupon, testimonials, product information or anything else that supports their ad. They also can use them in magazines, yellow page directories and billboards.

These are just a few applications, but generally, you can apply a QR Code or Microsoft Tag to link people to product details, contact

details, offer details, event details, competition details, a coupon and social media sites including YouTube videos.

2D Barcode Tips

When venturing into something new, you want to make sure to get it right. Here is some advice offered by John Parsons, principal of Byte Media Strategies, entitled "Six Simple Rules for QR Codes." John notes that the tips apply to all 2D barcode formats.

Keep the "Data Density" Low. A matrix of more than 33x33 data pixels raises the risk of incorrect scanning or processing. Phones vary in their ability to handle barcode density.

Print Conditions Matter. Generally, codes or tags should be at least one inch square, assuming the matrix is reasonably small and the user is holding the printed piece. For large printed pieces like posters, make the barcode or tag large enough for easy scanning and keep sufficient margins around the image to enable proper capturing and processing.

Make It Easy to Download the Reader. Most smartphones do not yet come equipped with preloaded 2D barcode reader software. Include a simple means of locating and downloading a free reader.

Make the Landing Page Mobile-friendly. Directing mobile users to an ordinary web page is the kiss of death. Make sure you optimize your landing page for mobile use.

Offer the User Something of Value. You're asking the user to do something special with their phone, so make sure their effort results in something worthwhile.

Give the User Something Meaningful to Do. To generate interest and encourage further action, the mobile landing page must include some meaningful, desirable action the user can take that makes sense from a mobile phone. These might include store directions via Google Mobile Maps, coupons, ►

tickets and reservations, streaming video or audio, immediate call back requests and anything else a smartphone can accomplish.

Connecting Print and Digital at Ripon Printers

Ripon Printers is fully capable of helping you connect your print materials to the Internet through use of QR Codes and Microsoft Tags. For more information, contact your Ripon Printers representative or send an email inquiry to sales@riponprinters.com.

RIPON

'I Still Like to hold a Book'

What a great time to be alive! Besides the obvious creature comforts that we take for granted, including indoor plumbing and electricity, we also are in the front row to witness unprecedented changes in technologies.

One piece of technology I didn't appreciate last year was the iPad. However, in mid March my family went away on vacation and I borrowed Ripon Printers' iPad to stay in touch with email (I'm not smart enough for a smart phone yet, although my wife just got one.). Anyway, it worked great, and I was able to use the relatively bigger screen of the iPad to quickly read and



Andy Lyke

react to the emails I received while out of the office. My 15- and 11-year-old boys also enjoyed several games on it, including Angry Birds and Plants vs. Zombies.

One thing that disappointed me however, was the ability to read a magazine online on the iPad. I subscribe to a publication that covers Notre Dame athletics, and while I get the magazine in print (yeah!), the publisher makes a PDF version available online for subscribers. Even with the big color screen of the iPad, it was still tough to read the stories and look at the pictures, without constantly moving the cursor here and there. Perhaps if it had been formatted specifically for the iPad it would have been different.

On vacation I did bring several books as well, and the books probably would have worked fine on a Kindle or some other type of e-reader. However, I didn't want to pay for another version of each of the books and, frankly, I still like to hold a book in my hand.

In the end, the iPad helped us to enjoy our vacation without being the center of the vacation. Like any good tool, it was great to use the iPad when needed, but it was also good to check out the pool and lay on the beach unconnected! **RIPON**

Meet that Familiar Voice

Meet our always-pleasant greeter, our guardian at the gate... **Cori Baier** is the first voice you hear when calling Ripon Printers. No "voicemail push-this" or "answer this question" – always a real person. And we take this opportunity to introduce her and recognize her 15th anniversary with the company.

Cori began working at Ripon as a member of our second shift on-call labor pool in the bindery. Once hired to fulltime, she worked 11 years in the bindery on first and second shift before applying for the receptionist position.



According to Cori, what is so special about Ripon Printers is that everyone here looks out for one another – whether someone needs help with the job they are doing or if someone is in need. "We had a bake sale for a past employee whose child has cancer. It seemed everyone chipped in some way. Some baked, made posters, bought baked goods or just donated money." She added, "I've even seen and heard about employees walking others in or out of the building when it's icy out just to make sure they don't slip, holding on until they are on 'safe' ground. I love how when you need someone, there is always some employee who seems to step up."

Cori can be seen cruising around the front office with her headset – able to support other departments with day-to-day tasks, delivering faxes, daily reports – while still keeping up with in-coming calls. When we do allow Cori to take some time off, Dianne Baumann, Julie Dombrowski, Laurie Sasada and Cheryl Wunder keep up the good work. Cori, her husband and two teenage daughters live just outside of the city of Ripon, where she enjoys planting flowers, scrapbooking and hanging out with friends and family. **RIPON**



Ripon Printers is a
Wisconsin Green Tier Participant

4 PressLines

GO, PACK, GO! *And they Did!*

As you might imagine, a vast majority of our employees bleed green and gold. The number of green and gold jerseys, jackets and accessories increased exponentially as the Packers charged their way into Super Bowl XLV.

Add in potluck feasts and super snacking... Ripon Printers was just about like Dallas – weather included! It sure was fun having little side bets and sharing joking emails with customers across the country. Let's hope we can do this again next year!



OUR DEFENSE [Prepress] from left: Benita Keplin, Linda Seaman, Dianne Baumann, Jodi Simmons, Ileen Kurczek and JoDee Mallowney.



OUR OFFENSE [Office] from left: Sue Hale, Cindy Sheskey, Joe Putzer, Laurie Sasada, Jim Krueger, Jane Eiler, Cheryl Wunder, Julie Hopp, Linda Gloyd, Jessica Miller, Kelly Bryant, Cori Baier, Lisa Kamphuis, Janet Darnick and Rich Kohl.



OUR SPECIAL TEAMS [Sales & Estimating] from left: Kris Miller, Terri Bornick, Todd Herzberg, Tom Welk, Jamie Krueger and Dave Mack.