



5 Tips for Creating Successful Mobile Barcode Campaigns

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Harnessing the Power of Print and Digital

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 QR Codes, Microsoft Tags and other mobile barcodes appeared. These allowed instant access to a mobile site simply by using a smartphone camera to take a picture of the barcode.

Now mobile barcodes are appearing everywhere, from catalogs to product packaging, business cards, billboards, real estate yard signs, posters, publication ads, social media and just about any other place you can imagine. According to a 2011 report by Mobio Identity Systems (www.mobioid.com), mobile barcode scanning traffic increased an incredible 459 percent between Q1 2010 and Q1 2011.

Part of the growth no doubt mirrors the growth of smartphones, a category that will continue to grow significantly. The number of U.S. wireless subscribers totaled 258.5 million in 2010, according to statistics from

Comscore and eMarketer. Virtually all industry forecasts expect that number to rise substantially over the next three years.

At the same time, marketers increasingly realize that print plays a key role in multichannel campaigns. Print drives important activity—especially sales activity—among all age groups. Thus the stars continue to align for mobile barcodes and their unique ability to provide a gateway between the print and digital worlds.

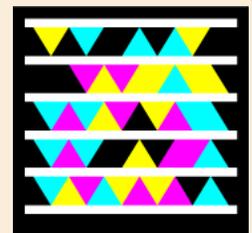


What is a Mobile Barcode?

A mobile barcode is a special two-dimensional barcode that you scan with your smartphone. It enables you to access many types of information including URLs, personal and professional contact information such as a vCard, product and service information, video and almost any other type of data.



QR code



Microsoft Tag

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Poor use of mobile barcodes litters the marketing and publishing landscapes. It's not as simple as generating a code and slapping it on communication materials. Here are five tips that will help you increase the success of your campaigns by incorporating mobile barcodes:

I. Learn About the Different Code Types.

The term QR code is becoming the industry standard for any mobile barcode, similar to the position Kleenex occupies in the tissue market and Xerox in the copier market. But in truth there are numerous other mobile barcode choices to consider, each with some different attributes.

But make no mistake. QR codes earned their widespread use. They are perhaps the most universal and easiest to create, and many smartphones come equipped with a QR code reader. They are also improving their traceability, and more QR code generators are incorporating this feature.

Probably the most significant rival to the QR code is the Microsoft Tag. Many think the main strength of Tags is their design flexibility. Here are the reasons Microsoft advances to choose their version over QR codes and other alternatives:

• 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 size

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. These 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 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 is scanning 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.



2. Know the Age and Gender Sweet Spots.

All age demographic groups, including those 55+, are increasingly using mobile barcodes. But the prime categories trend younger, with 35 - 44-year-olds leading the pack, followed closely by those 25-34 and 18-24.

Looking at gender, the Mobio report indicates that 68 percent of mobile barcode users are female. The report contends that women show a higher interest in the ease of collecting information on products and services (the number one use of mobile barcodes by far), entering contests and making purchases using their smartphones.



3. Learn the basic mobile barcode best practices.

When you're venturing into something new, you want to make sure you get it right. Here is some important marketing and production advice offered by John Parsons (john@bytemedia.com), principal of Byte Media Strategies:

- **Keep the "Data Density" Low.** A matrix of more than 33 x 33 data pixels raises the risk of incorrect scanning or processing. Phones vary in their ability to handle barcode density.
- **Print Conditions Matter.** Generally, mobile barcodes 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 mobile 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 users to do something special with their phones, so make sure their effort results in something worthwhile. Some ideas include providing product details, a coupon or special offer, a YouTube video link, a social media page, event details and white papers.

- **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.

4. Analytics are a Must.

There are many free online code generators. Don't settle for one that doesn't provide the analytics you need. Other marketing authorities also recommend using a code generator that links directly to your service, not through theirs. To find out where the service links, simply scan the produced code.

5. Test and Test Again.

You can easily annoy customers and prospects with a mobile barcode that doesn't work well. Test on multiple mobile phones, especially the most popular mobile barcode scanning devices (iPhone, iPodTouch, Droid, GT-1900, Samsung SGH, PC 3610, X10, iPad and Blackberry Bold 9700 according to the Mobio report), using multiple mobile code scanners. Some marketers suggest even using a short, quick print proof to test the code in its final state.



Case Study: Fish Brothers Concrete Raising

Background

Fish Brothers Concrete Raising specializes in using a “mudjacking” process to raise driveways, walkways, patios, garage floors and sidewalks back to their original position. They accomplish this by pumping a specialized, non-shrinking grout under the existing concrete, saving owners 50-75 percent off concrete replacement. Fish Brothers serves the greater Madison (WI) area.

Challenge

All construction-related services are very competitive, especially now, and Fish Brothers constantly looks for new ways to connect with customers and generate business. While many construction companies are more mechanical than marketing savvy, the management team at Fish Brothers was actively looking for ways to incorporate new technologies into their marketing program. Their success story incorporates a new program from the USPS as well as mobile barcodes.

Solution

Fish Brothers took advantage of the USPS’ “Every Door Direct Mail” new market trial. The trial, which could become permanent if successful, aims to make it much easier for small businesses to use the U.S. Mail to promote their products and services to local consumers. It waives permits and mailing fees, as well as simplifying requirements for addressing direct mail items.

Based on the Postal Service’s Standard Mail saturation flats service, Every Door Direct Mail is limited to mail pieces with the standard flats dimensions, and up to 3.3 ounces in weight per piece. Mailers must send items to every active address in a local area or carrier route, although there is an opt-out system for consumers to contact mailers if they do not wish to receive future items.

Fish Brothers asked Ripon Printers to produce a 6 1/4” x 11” card mailer in full color. Included in the design was a QR code that took recipients directly to the company’s website. Ripon Printers performed all aspects of the production process as well as coordination with the USPS.

Results

The first geographically targeted mailing of 300 cards proved ineffective beyond the value of targeted messaging. But Fish Brothers principals Brett and Aubrey Fish decided to give the program another try. This time the results were much more favorable as the mailing produced 15 telephone inquiries that converted to 13 projects as well as what Fish Brothers describes as collateral work—projects that come from customer referrals as well as some old fashioned one-on-one solicitation within the neighborhood.

Brett Fish, who heads the company’s marketing efforts, says they can’t yet attribute a specific amount of business directly to the QR code, but he’s convinced it plays a role. “If nothing else, it helps set us apart from other contractors in how customers and prospects perceive us,” he says. “A number of people remark about the QR codes in our conversations.” That’s because Fish Brothers also includes QR Codes on their business cards as well as on the banner that helps decorate their booth at chamber of commerce and other trade shows. “Out of 200 exhibitors at our last show, no one else displayed a QR code,” notes Brett. It’s okay with Fish Brothers if they never know what they’re missing.

Fish Brothers Concrete Raising

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Brett Fish



Aubrey Fish



About Ripon Printers

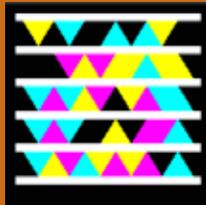
Ripon Printers serves small to mid-size catalog marketers and publishers, producing catalogs, publications and a wide range of direct mail products. Linking our capabilities together is an obsessive devotion to customer service that places your satisfaction above any other business goals.

We offer a complete range of print solutions that includes coldset and heatset web printing as well as sheetfed and digital printing. Whatever your needs, Ripon Printers has the right fit. A variety of integrated multichannel capabilities, from digital editions to email marketing, personalized URLs, mobile barcodes and digital storefronts complement our print production, fulfillment and distribution services

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