

## QR Codes - The Next Wave for B2B Marketers?

by Mary Gospe

A QR Code, short for "quick response," is a square two-dimensional barcode readable by mobile phones with photo/scanner capabilities. According to Wikipedia "... the code consists of black modules arranged in a square pattern on a white background. The information encoded can be text, URL or other data." QR codes are appearing on apparel, art, billboards, buses, business cards, direct mail, in-store displays, posters, print ads, and even tattoos! A scan of a QR code with your mobile phone will typically take you to a landing page or launch a video, without the need to manually type in a URL.

QR Codes were first developed in Japan by a Toyota subsidiary in the mid 90s to track vehicle parts. They are prevalent in Japan and Korea for commercial use and consumer convenience applications aimed at mobile phone users (called mobile tagging). They are now catching on in the U.S., especially for marketing applications. According to Vancouver-based [Mobio Identity Systems](#) in their report "[The Naked Facts: Whiplash Edition](#)" released on May 10, 2011, QR barcode use in North America grew an astounding 4,549% during Q1 2011 versus the same period last year. Primary users are Generation X, aged 35-44, and female.

Consumer products companies like Macy's, Target, and Best Buy, are using the codes as well as B2B vendors and media outlets. I recently saw QR codes in the May 26, 2011 issue of *Rolling Stone* for Bose speakers, and in the May 2011 issue of *CRM Magazine* for two trade shows: CRM evolution 2011 and SpeechTEK 2011.

Having never used a QR code, I went to the App Store on my iPhone and downloaded QRReader, from [TapMedia](#), which is free and had a rating of four stars. I tried to read the Bose ad in *Rolling Stone* but nothing happened. I then downloaded the app suggested on the Bose ad - [TagReader by Mobi](#). Once installed, I clicked on the app, pointed my iPhone at the QR Code and it immediately took me to a video about the Bose SoundDock Portable digital music system - complete with music. I then used TagReader to read the CRM evolution QR Tag in *CRM Magazine* and nothing happened. I then switched back to QRReader and it read the code immediately - taking me to the CRM evolution home page. So, from my limited experience, having multiple QR readers seems to be in order in case one does not work with a particular QR code.

Next, I wanted to create a QR code for the KickStart Alliance ([www.kickstartall.com](http://www.kickstartall.com)) home page. A quick Google search on "qr code generator" led me to [Smarty Tags](#). I set up a free account in seconds, typed in the KickStart Alliance URL - [www.kickstartall.com](http://www.kickstartall.com) - and was presented with this image:



Using QRReader I scanned the image with my iPhone and was directed to the KickStart Alliance home page. Quick and easy.

According to Adam Sutton at Marketing Sherpa, "...offline ads are likely to get a refreshing breath of relevance as 2D barcode technology becomes more prevalent in mobile phones." Certainly adding QR Codes to a direct mail piece or brochure gives the recipient instant access to your landing page or video without having to be at their desktop. Anything to remove a barrier to responding to your call to action is a good thing, and the convenience and "cool factor" of QR Codes make them something B2B marketers should test out.

### About the Author:

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