

facebook

twitter

You Tube

SMART

SOCIAL MEDIA AND RELATED TECHNOLOGIES

GROUP

flickr™

Linked in

QR Codes

Should Your Company Start Implementing Them?

By: Jason Hemsoth

July 2011



This summary is an original report researched, produced and released by BMG to help construction and related equipment manufacturers understand social media and related technologies. © Barlow Marketing Group – All rights reserved.

QR Codes

Should Your Company Start Implementing Them?

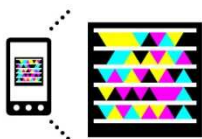
By now, surely you've started to notice the little black and white blocky images called QR codes popping up on ads, posters and even business cards, right? So you might be wondering, what are they exactly and what are they used for? Could they impact my business in the construction industry?

QR stands for "quick response." It's similar to a barcode, in that scanning it will allow the user to access information. QR codes can hold much more information than traditional barcodes, however, and can be scanned by smartphone users, giving them instant access to a variety of multimedia content. The ability of QR codes to instantly connect people with each other and to multimedia content can be very useful for your business and your customers.



The most common destination is a website, (usually a special mobile-optimized landing page) but it could also trigger actions such as sending an email or text message or even initiating a phone call.

One of the benefits of using QR codes is that its statistics can be tracked. This can provide valuable information that would be impossible or difficult to collect another way. The easiest way to do this is to simply utilize Google Analytics on the page that it links to. Some of the other tracking methods require implementing an additional service.



Get the free mobile app at <http://gettag.mobi>

QR codes aren't the only game in town, either. There are other codes that serve the same purpose, but look different and require a different smartphone application to scan them. The multi-colored 2D Microsoft Tag Barcode is one of them. It requires the Microsoft's TagReader application.

Another code called JagTag has also surfaced. This code allows any camera phone that can send photos via text message (not just smartphones) to scan these codes. However, it does

require the user to go through several steps and also wait a short amount of time. On the positive side, it does provide the manufacturer with each user's cell phone number. How many users would be willing to jump through the necessary hoops to make it work, though? Probably not many.

When looking at any new technology, you always want to closely examine the pros and cons before deciding whether to implement it as a tool to help grow your business. Here's a quick rundown of the pros and cons of these scanable codes.

Pros

- Can help create a buzz around your product or company.
- Provide instant access to the multimedia information you make available.
- Contain accurate, built-in tracking.
- No need to reprint materials. If details change, you can simply change the content the link is associated with.
- Easily connect online and offline worlds.

Cons

- Novelty may soon wear off.
- Most codes require a smartphone (iPhone, Android, other camera-enabled smartphone).
- Requires installation of an appropriate application on the user's smartphone.
- There are various types of codes, each using a specific application or process.
- Web link security is at times questionable.
- It will take some time, possibly even years, before the management with purchasing power adopts this approach to information.

Case Study: *Equipment World*, June 2011

For this report, the June 2011 issue of *Equipment World* was randomly chosen to review. We wanted to see if companies are using QR codes, how they're using them and if any of this is relevant to you in the construction industry. We made note of all the QR codes and similar codes to see how prevalent they are and to test their performance. Surprisingly, six codes were present. Here's what we found:

- **QR Code For Work Semi-Truck Manufacturer** (Page 2) – In order to get the code to scan correctly, the distance (and therefore the focus) had to be correct, but then it worked very well. The code linked to the mobile site, which gave 95 reasons to choose that manufacturer's truck.

- **MS Tag For Dozer Positioning System** (Page 13) – The code scanned instantly and effortlessly linked to a product-specific mobile website with information and additional links to a brochure and video, among other things.
- **JagTag For Skid Steer Manufacturer** (Page 37) – First, we had to take a picture of the code. Second, we sent the picture via text message (multimedia texting rates apply) to the number indicated. We waited about a minute. We then received an embedded video (multimedia texting rates apply) and three other text messages (normal texting rates apply); one as a header, one with a message, with the final one containing a link to see a longer video on YouTube’s mobile site.
- **MS Tags Featured On Products** (Page 62) – A product spotlight section highlighted a line of products that have MS Tags directly on the products. The photo included showed a cell phone scanning one of the codes.
- **MS Tag For Trailer Manufacturer** (Page 80) – The physical dimensions of the actual code were much smaller, but it still worked quickly. Linked to company website with a mobile-friendly theme applied by default.
- **QR Code For Breaker Manufacturer** (Page 89) – We had to try two different applications to get this one to work properly. The first application scanned the code, but then tried to place a phone call, which was an incorrect response. The second application scanned the code correctly, which led to the opportunity to save contact info as a new contact on our phone.

So, should you include a QR code on your next product, print ad or business card? The answer depends on what you’re looking to accomplish. If you want to create buzz, appear high-tech and provide an easy way to access multimedia content (even if it’s only perceived to be easier), then yes, do it. Make sure you’re prepared to build a unique campaign around it, or at least produce specific, quality multimedia content that you would link the code to when scanned.

If you do decide to move forward with QR codes, here’s a quick step-by-step guide to get you started:

1. Decide on a format: QR, MS Tag or JagTag.
2. Determine your customer call to action. What do you want them to do?
3. Determine what kind of promotion customers will receive when they scan the code. Reward the user; don’t just expect them to participate just because you want them to. Offer a sneak peak at a new product, a discount or an added-value item.
4. Determine where your customer will see the code. Brochures, ads, business cards, direct mailers or even directly on your company’s products are all possibilities.

5. Let users know about it. Announce the offer on your website, Facebook page, Twitter, ads, emails, etc.
6. Create the code and set up the tracking using specific web programs.

Evenly weighing the pros and cons, however, most would come to the conclusion that a QR code isn't necessary in the construction industry quite yet. There's not a standardized format that encompasses all codes. They don't perform perfectly all the time, and honestly, they require enough action on the user's behalf that most people would decide to just pass on it altogether, especially after the novelty of it wears off.

It's definitely an area to keep an eye on, however. Codes and tags have been used extensively in Japan and other countries and are becoming more and more commonplace in the United States. We may start to see them everywhere and they may become as common, and necessary, as a website. Or they may disappear almost completely. Only time will tell. In the mean time, based on what you're looking to accomplish, consider the pros and cons of QR codes, then make a decision that fits your business.

Don't know where to start? BMG can help. For more information about this and other research done by the SMART Group, contact Jason Hemsoth at jhemsoth@growwithbmg.com or call 260.422.7100.