



QR Codes



What is it?

QR codes are two-dimensional bar codes that can contain any alphanumeric text and often feature URLs that direct users to sites where they can learn about an object or place (a practice known as “mobile tagging”). Decoding software on tools such as camera phones interprets the codes, which represent considerably more information than a one-dimensional code of similar size. The codes are increasingly found in places such as product labels, billboards, and buildings, inviting passers-by to pull out their mobile phones and uncover the encoded information. Codes can provide tracking information for products in industry, routing data on a mailing label, or contact information on a business card. Small in size, the code pattern can be hidden or integrated into a esthetically attractive image in newspapers, magazines, or clothing.

QR codes are popular in Japan, where they are used for commercial tracking, logistics, inventory control, and advertising. Their popularity is climbing in Europe, the U.S., and Canada as people continue to use their mobile phones to access 3G networks.

How does it work?

Data can be translated into a QR code by any QR generator. Users simply enter the data to be translated, and the generator produces the code, which can then be displayed electronically or in printed format. Decoding the information can be done with any mobile camera phone that has a QR reader, which is freely available online for most devices. I found that ScanLife works well. You can download this to your phone by going to www.2dscan.com on your phone. Or visit www.getscanlife.com from your web browser on your computer. Once the software is loaded, a user points the cell phone camera toward the code and scans it or takes a picture for the software to scan the code. The software interprets the code, and the cell phone will either display the text or ask for permission to launch a browser to display the specified web page.

Not everyone is aware of QR codes. As a result, not everyone who sees one will know to pull out a cell phone and take a picture of the code. Not everyone owns a camera phone, and because many cells phones do not include a QR reader, the software must be downloaded and tested. Moreover, a QR code might direct users to website that does not display properly on a cell phone.

What OmahaPrint has on the back of its business cards are two QR codes. One for the cardholder contact information and the other is the OmahaPrint website.

When the contact information barcode is scanned, the software decodes the barcode, it will then take you to a page and ask you to continue. The next page shows your name with a button that says “Add to Contacts”. You click the button and your contact info is added to your address book. The code for the website, you guessed it, takes you to our website.