



Technology for Events: QR CODES ARE HERE

By Florence May

Those “matrix barcodes” with squared patterns are sweeping into North America from Asia and Europe where they have been popular for many years. QR or Quick Response Codes were created by Toyota in 1994 to track auto parts but now this multi-faceted tool is popping up everywhere.

QR codes are a type of barcode that can be seen in a wide variety of products. Look for these examples:

- Read the front page of USA Today to find QR codes linking the reader to additional story pictures.
- Check for QR code printed on the plastic information tab stuck in the soil of a plant from Wal-Mart for gardening tips.
- Note that savvy business people are imprinting QR codes on their business cards to connect directly with corporate websites.

How Can QR Codes Help Event Planners?

The codes are still relatively new to most of the North American market but the skyrocketing growth of QR code creation and popularity of the QR

scanners on smart phones would likely indicate that this phenomena will have staying power.

Consider these options as you make your event more accessible with minimal expense.

Promotions: A QR code on flyers, Newspapers or posters can take viewers to a ticket purchase site or the event website for more details. The QR codes are attention getters as people passing by hold up phones to scan the code.

Information Please: Print a QR code on your event tickets or on information signs around your event. These will allow attendees to go to your online event map and/or event schedule.

Vendors: Put QR codes on each vendor sign at your event and sponsor a contest to encourage attendees to stop by as many booths as possible. The winner is the person who logs the most QR scans.

Vendors II: Encourage vendors to create their own QR signs with promotional information to drive future traffic to their websites or retail spots.

Tickets: You can now buy tickets online and receive a unique QR code by e-mail or SMS.

If you decide to use QR or other mobile barcodes, Laura Marriott of NeoMedia recommends five effectiveness tips:

- Incorporate the mobile barcodes into all digital and traditional media to ensure 360 degree exposure.
- Create value by incorporating an exclusive offer, contest, or promotional discount.
- Produce the code in basic black and white so all scanners can read it.
- Test to ensure your barcode links through to a mobile enabled site (not a PC site).
- Mobile barcodes have tracking capabilities so take the time to determine the effectiveness of your campaign based on your pre-determined goals.

How Do QR Codes Work?

1. Where can I put a QR code? The codes can be printed on any flat surface including promotional posters, tickets, and vendor signs.
2. How do I create a QR for my event? Event managers can create an event QR code simply by using any one of the numerous QR generators online. Just do a search for QR generator. There are free and paid options depending on the level of print and artistic quality.
3. How do I scan a QR? Reader applications are available on many camera phones. A growing number of smart phones come with QR readers installed while others offer numerous reader applications.
4. How do I measure the effectiveness of my QR campaign? QR generators typically have an analytics tool that will allow you to view daily, weekly, monthly and yearly scans by the locations they were scanned from and the phone models that were used to scan the code.
5. Are there risks? Yes. QR codes must be printed in high enough quality that scanners can read clearly. And remember to only scan QR codes from reputable sources to decrease the chance of opening a virus.

Florence May is the President of TRS - The Registration System and a recognized speaker on event technology. TRS supplies online volunteer, event and ticketing to festivals and events across North America. Clients include Kentucky Derby Festival, Indy 500 Festival, Sea-Fair, Freedom Festival, French Quarter Festivals, San Antonio Rock n Roll Marathon, and numerous Olympic Trials.