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How to take advantage of QR codes

Similar to online coupons and coupon codes, but less understood, many marketers have steered clear of Quick Response (QR) codes. They either don't understand how the images can be used to their benefit or believe the images are another UPC symbol. The truth is, QR codes can have a big impact for brands, especially as the general marketplace becomes more mobile.

by Kristina Knight

The art of coding and discounts is a blurry area for most marketers. Many want to use those 2-D black and white blocks, but simply don't know how. I had the chance to chat with Vestcom's Jeff Weidauer, vice-president of marketing, about the benefit of these codes for marketers.

"QR Codes, also known as 2D Barcodes, consist of a small square of black and white blocks that can be read by a decoding application or a smartphone," said Weidauer. "They can contain over 7,000 pieces of data, and are generally used to link to content on a mobile website."



Jeff Weidauer,
VP Marketing, Vestcom

That content can be anything from product information to coupons and coupon codes. Weidauer expects QR codes to expand even more over the next few years as smartphones, tablets and other portable devices become even smarter.

"As smartphone cameras become more advanced and can read more detailed codes, the amount of information contained within a code could increase, making actual Internet connection unnecessary [because] an image or detailed information could be loaded into the code itself," he said. "In addition, as mobile devices become more sophisticated and connection speeds increase, the amount of information, and the complexity of the mobile websites will increase as well."

Right now most brands are using QR codes on their product labels, but in the future he believes stores will include the codes on shelf-edging, which should increase their versatility even more. This, of course, means brands and stores will have to work in concert with one another so that the offers and information are targeted to specific consumer bases.

"QR codes will make mobile coupons irrelevant," said Weidauer. "The real value is in the ties to much greater levels of information, for both the shopper and the retailer. With a link to the retailer's loyalty program, multiple shoppers can scan the same code and receive different offers, such as a reduced price or a cross-sell reminder, based on the shopper's history. This is real-time targeting with measurable ROI. The real benefit of QR codes is far beyond just a digital coupon."

Vestcom creates shelf-edge programs for brands to help create a greater connection between consumer and product.

Jeff Weidauer is Vice President of Marketing at Vestcom, the leading provider of customized shelf-edge communication for the retail industry, driving sales and reducing costs for the nation's top retailers and their suppliers. Mr. Weidauer can be reached at jweidauer@vestcom.com or 501.663.0100.

