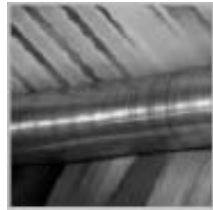


# Article



## QR Codes: A Reality for B2B Marketers

*By: Barb Pellow*

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## Key Highlights

- QR codes are becoming popular in the United States, particularly for marketing applications.
- The primary users of QR codes are females between the ages of 35 and 44.
- Although many QR codes are targeted at consumers, they can also be used to enhance marketing in the business-to-business segment.
- For B2B marketing, mobile technology is fundamentally changing the way that people communicate.
- Blending QR codes with print provides B2B marketers with an opportunity to get prospects and customers to “opt in” to a more personal mobile relationship.

## Introduction

There has been a lot of buzz surrounding QR codes. A QR (quick response) code is a square two-dimensional barcode that is 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.”

These days, QR codes are appearing everywhere. You can find them on apparel, art, billboards, buses, business cards, direct mail, in-store displays, posters, print ads, and even tattoos! Scanning 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.

Although they first gained popularity overseas, QR codes are now catching on in the U.S., especially for marketing applications. According to Vancouver-based Mobio Identity Systems in its May 2011 report entitled “The Naked Facts: Whiplash Edition,” QR barcode use in North America grew by an astounding 4,549% during Q1 2011 in relation to the same quarter last year. The primary users of QR codes are female Generation X-ers between the ages of 35 and 44.

## QR Codes in the B2B Segment

I conducted a presentation during this past week, and one of the audience members had a question for me. This participant stated, “I have seen a number of QR codes targeted at consumers. They are showing up at Macy’s, Target, and Best Buy... but how can I sell them to my customers that are B2B marketers? How can I help them use codes to enhance marketing in the B2B segment?”

Characteristics of the B2B market typically include:

- Relationship-driven engagements with an emphasis on maximizing the value of the relationship
- A more complex decision-making process with multiple influencers in the process
- A focus on a smaller, well-identified target market
- A multi-step buying process with a longer sales cycle
- A system that creates brand loyalty through personal relationships and engagement
- A system that uses educational and awareness-building activities
- A system that leverages rational buying decisions based on business value

In today’s on-the-go environment, 82% of executives own smartphones. In addition, 49% of C-level executives conduct searches on their mobile devices. In the B2B environment, integration with mobile channels will be essential. For B2B marketing, mobile isn’t just another channel in the mix. Mobile technology is fundamentally changing the way that people communicate. The next time you’re in a meeting, take a look around—BlackBerries and smartphones are out and active. This has been so natural for the past seven or eight years that many of us don’t even notice it.

As in the business-to-consumer (B2C) market, QR codes can also be used to bridge the gap between print and mobile in the business world. Examples of effective use are expanding in the B2B market, specifically focusing on helping the B2B market educate and inform customers by blending print and mobile technologies. QR codes are also being used to build out opt-in B2B mobile databases. Key techniques that B2B marketers are leveraging include:

- **Trade shows:** Marketers are creating signs with QR codes that link to product sheets, catalogs, mobile videos, after-event party invitations, or forms to request a follow-up call and information.
- **Industry magazine print ads:** QR codes being used to generate leads from print ads. They can link to case studies, white papers, installation guides, specific tools, or video media. They can also dial directly into your sales department for more information.
- **Business cards:** QR codes can provide an electronic contact entry, directions to your location, a link to your blog, access to a video, or information on your latest product promotion.
- **Providing greater depth to printed brochures and catalogs:** QR codes are being used to keep printed collateral up-to-date and make it more interactive by linking it to brochures and catalogs, relevant case studies, white papers, product upgrades/enhancements, and video demonstrations.
- **Direct mail:** QR codes are being used to make postcards that link to a catalog, a Facebook page, a direct line to your sales department, or a video message from your CEO.
- **Product packaging:** Codes can provide direct links to text support numbers, more information, installation guides, and videos.
- **Equipment component labels:** When snapped, some QR codes can automatically route the customer to the best tech support person for that device, along with the device's serial number and configuration.

### **InfoTrends' Opinion**

**In today's world, smartphones are rapidly becoming mobile computers that also happen to ring. These devices are with their owners 24 hours a day, 7 days a week—making them a very personal form of communication. Blending QR codes with print provides B2B marketers with an opportunity to get prospects and customers to “opt in” to a more personal mobile relationship. It's time for print and cross-media service providers to help B2B marketers establish more profitable relationships through the effective use of QR code campaigns!**

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## About the Author



**Barb Pellow**

Group Director

[barb\\_pellow@infotrends.com](mailto:barb_pellow@infotrends.com)

+1 781-616-2161

A digital printing and publishing pioneer as well as marketing expert, Barbara Pellow helps companies develop multi-media strategies. She assists companies in creating strategies to launch new products, building strategic marketing plans, and educating their sales force on delivering value.

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