P*RIN*tips

New Media Means...
New Ways to Reach Customers

The term *old media* and its companion *legacy media* refer to traditional ways of communicating with customers. Printers are generally considered to be part of old media, along with other paper-based industries like newspapers, magazines, and books as well as radio, television, and movies. In contrast, *new media* is digital and includes the Internet, websites, and most computer-based forms of communication.

New media is exciting because it brings new tools to the process of communicating with customers – tools like full color printing, highly personalized sales messages, and interactive outreach – as well as empowering prospects and customers to quickly and easily find reliable information about products, services, and vendors.

In this issue of Printips, we present an overview of ways we can help you take advantage of new media to communicate with your customers and prospects. We recommend that you add these to your sales and marketing activities rather than replacing what you are already doing. This is because we firmly believe that new media is not replacing old, but adding to available communication possibilities.

QR Codes

One of the more exciting examples of new technology is the QR code. QR stands for Quick Response, aptly named because the contents of the code can be decoded at high speed by devices including mobile phones equipped with a camera, net books, laptop computers, desktop computers, cameras, and televisions.

QR codes are the new way for customers and prospects to reach a web page, a location (using geocodes) or obtain information about products and services. Add a QR code containing contact information to your business card and someone can add you to their contact list by reading the QR code with their cell phone or computer. Add a QR code to individual products on your web site and enable customers or prospects to download product details and a phone number for ordering, or link to a YouTube video.

QR codes were developed in 1994 by the Japanese company Denso-Wave as a way to track parts in vehicle manufacturing. The code is a 2-D symbology because it stores information both horizontally and vertically and thus is able to hold much more data than a one-dimensional bar code.

QR Code (2D Code)

Contains
data

Contains data

Bar Code

Contains
no data

Contains data

The typical barcode holds a maximum of 20 digits, while a QR code can hold up to 7,089 characters. In addition, QR codes take up about one-tenth the space of a bar code. This ability to hold a great deal of information in a small space is what makes QR codes so valuable for sales and marketing.

QR codes are quite common in Japan and their use is growing in Europe. In the United States, QR codes are just beginning to appear but are expected to spread rapidly. A QR code may be applied to many substrates – paper, plastic, even cloth – and on many surfaces, including curved ones – walls, floors, billboards, t-shirts. About the only limitation is ensuring that the QR code is of sufficient resolution to be read by the mobile phone or other device.

An example of how QR codes are being used is the Google program *Google Places,* a way for businesses to manage their presence on Google. Any business that is selected by Google as a *Favorite Place* receives a window decal that includes a QR code that takes the viewer to the Google Place Page for the business. Google has already distributed 100,000 Favorite Places decals and is planning a second round of 50,000 more.

With Google promoting QR codes, they are likely to become very important in search marketing. Google suggests that if your web site contains a QR code, search engines will see a new image and index it, and might in the future index the content in them.

Many mobile phones, including iPhone, Blackberry, Motorola Droid, and any phone that runs on the Android operating system, have application software available for scanning QR codes. Some phones may have the app already installed on the phone; if not, it can be easily downloaded and installed. One feature is necessary, though – the mobile phone must have a camera. After reading the QR code, a phone with a web browser can connect to a URL, download an MP3 file, dial a phone number, or send an e-mail.

"In the United States, QR codes are just beginning to appear but are expected to spread rapidly."

"A QR code on a direct mail piece can take the recipient directly to the web site of the business offering the product or service."

QR codes have other uses besides marketing material. An educational organization can direct people to reference or training materials. An online product catalog can use a QR code to provide complete product specifications. Retail locations can use QR codes to provide additional information – such as a restaurant providing nutritional information for items on the menu. A QR code on a direct mail piece can take the recipient directly to the web site of the business offering the product or service.

Variable data printing

High speed copying in both black and white and color has been a standard service offering of TechneGraphics Inc. since 1990. Once digital printers began to replace analog copiers, the possibility of *variable data printing (VDP)* was realized.

VDP enables various elements of a document – text, graphics, and images – to change from one page to the next with no degradation of print speed or quality. From a production standpoint, VDP is a continuum from the simplest mail merge (changing the name and salutation of a letter) to versioning (customizing the document for a defined group rather than for a specific individual) to 1-to-1 printing where each document is completely unique. An example of simple VDP is a post card that is printed with the name and address of the intended recipient. If the photograph on the post card and part of the sales message changes depending on the demographic characteristics of the recipient, that's versioning. If the post card contains a photograph of the recipient as well as text with personal information, that's 1-to-1 marketing.

VDP requires three things: a document template containing all the information that stays the same from page to page (the static data), a mailing list containing addressing information and recipient characteristics, and a database containing all the information that changes from page to page (the variable data). The static template also indicates the location of variable data elements within the document.

VDP has many applications: 1-to-1 direct marketing, customer relationship management, Explanation of Benefits forms and other insurance documents, catalogs, promotional material, and lots more. Its popularity is based on two advantages: for advertising and marketing material – particularly direct mail marketing campaigns – response rates generally rise as the level of personalization goes up. And for informational documents such as insurance benefit booklets, VDP allows a booklet to be created that contains only the information pertinent to the insured person – no more and no less.

Call us for QR codes and VDP

We invite you to call us to discuss how QR codes and variable data printing can benefit your business or organization. We'll help you generate a QR code that is appropriate for your intended application and add it to business cards and marketing materials – either now, or at the next printing.

If you'd like to try out QR codes right now, ask us for a quote on a small supply of digitally printed brochures. Contact us at 513-2121, we're here to help – and we're out to prove that at TechneGraphics Inc., "old media" is now new media.

"We'll help you generate a QR code that is appropriate for your intended application and add it to business cards and marketing materials..."

Q. *I'm intrigued by the possibilities of using a QR code. Is there any technical information I need to know?*

A. We agree – QR codes are an exciting new marketing tool. Besides containing a URL, a QR code can contain a phone number, an SMS message, V-card data, or even plain alphanumeric text. Because of FNC1 Application Identifiers in the encoded data, the scanning device (like a mobile phone) will automatically open the correct application for whatever the QR code contains.
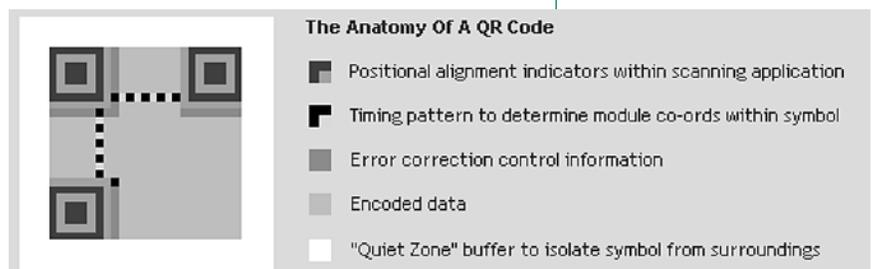
To guarantee that QR codes are the same worldwide, the technical specifications are contained in an ISO standard (ISO-18004). There are forty versions of a QR code, each differing by the number of data modules (dots) required to store the data. The smallest (Version 1) is a 21x21 array of data elements containing 25 characters;

the array increases in size by four modules for each additional version. Version 40, the largest QR code, is 177x177 modules and holds up to 4296 characters of alphanumeric data.

QR codes contain internal orientation calibration and self-alignment markers. This means whether the QR code is right side up, upside down or rotated 90 degrees or is wrapped around a curved surface, it can still be read.

Even though QR codes contain error correction data, technical limitations in the resolution in most of today's mobile phone cameras mean the size of a QR code is important – a Version 5 (37x37) or greater QR code runs the risk of incorrect decoding. So if you intend to have your QR code read by mobile phones and PDAs, it is best to stay with Version 4 or lower and a QR code symbol of at least 0.85 inches across.

"...whether the QR code is right side up, upside down or rotated 90 degrees or is wrapped around a curved surface, it can still be read."

The Anatomy Of A QR Code

- Positional alignment indicators within scanning application
- Timing pattern to determine module co-ords within symbol
- Error correction control information
- Encoded data
- "Quiet Zone" buffer to isolate symbol from surroundings

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Personalize Your Printing

TRICKS & tips

"Digital printing also allows us to personalize sales and marketing material..."

One piece of high tech equipment with measurable benefits for you is our high speed color digital printer. At 35 copies per minute and no time required for setup, we can print on demand in full color in less time than you can imagine. Gone are the days of minimum print runs and waiting days for the printing to be complete. Now you can print exactly what you need, whenever you need it, and do it all at an affordable price.

With shorter print runs, you reduce or eliminate the cost of warehousing an inventory of printed materials and eliminate the risk that printed materials will become outdated while you still have a large supply on hand. Digital printing also allows us to personalize sales and marketing material for a particular customer or client or target audience. For example, if you are speaking to a group, you can personalize your handout material with the name of the group or with information you know will specifically appeal to them.

Personalized URLs (PURLs)

IDEA CORNER

"A PURL combines a response device with a web site."

An outgrowth of the capabilities of variable data printing is personalized URLs (PURLs) on direct mail marketing pieces. A PURL is the web address of a *landing page* that is unique to the individual recipient of the marketing piece. A PURL combines a response device with a web site.

When a recipient goes to the PURL landing page, the response device is immediately filled with the recipient's contact information (such as name, address, telephone, e-mail). With the click of the mouse, the recipient can request information or take advantage of the offer. And as soon as that happens, the PURL generates an e-mail message that is essentially a sales lead. The novelty of the PURL, combined with the ease of responding, is said to increase response rate.

Some applications for PURLs include requesting a free sample, information, or trial; to take advantage of an offer or a discount; to RSVP or register for an event; and to complete a survey.