Preparing to Use a
QR CODE

By Stan Michaels

We've all seen them. Those funny little squares that look like a graffiti artist went crazy. So what are they?

The common name for them is "QR codes" – the QR standing for quick response. The idea here is to generate one of these and place it on something that a person who has a smart phone, and an app to read it, can snap a picture of it and have something happen.

You'll find many free online generators that are fill-in-the-blanks and will create your code for you. Simply use your favorite search engine to look for "QR codes" and you'll get back numerous responses.

I think the common mistake that is made by businesses wanting to jump on this bandwagon is not being prepared for what will happen. Remember, a person with a smart phone is scanning this code. Are you ready for a person to view your website with a 2-inch screen? No, not the monster desktop screens we've all become accustomed to at home and work. Nor even the smaller iPad or laptop screens, that are huge in comparison to a Blackberry or other phone.

Can your phone reduce the size and display it? In many cases, yes – but it is scaling them. So, unlike a site that has been optimized for a small screen, it's like looking at a postage stamp of your website. The user will be forced to zoom and scroll constantly. This makes for

a rather unenjoyable experience, and will almost always result in that person leaving your website earlier than expected, resulting in a lost opportunity for you.

Before you spend resources on vehicle wraps, business cards, and other collateral materials with your QR code on them, do your due diligence and at the least create a simple, optimized landing page for online visitors that will display your information properly. Ideally your entire website, or at the very least what you want them to see, would be created to cater to your audience.

Smart phones and smart devices certainly aren't going away. Preparing your business for more users visiting your site with these devices is not lost money. It's just smart business.

I'd be remiss not to note that many businesses forbid employees to download unapproved applications to company devices. Regardless of how innocuous those applications may be. While in the past, your cell phone may have been exempt from this policy, that will soon very likely begin to change, as indeed it should. So if you're targeting employees from other companies with your QR code, understand that most smart phones in production right now will require an application download to use a QR code. If company policy forbids that, then they'll have no way to use your QR code.

As with any marketing plan, especially one dealing with technology, it's always best to consult a trained professional. While you may have had your brother-in-law's cousin do your company's website, it's highly unlikely that they're trained to develop mobile application redirects for your QR codes or mobile vistors. Currently, NBIZ Magazine is in development to add mobile website browsing. If you're planning to use any QR codes, or just wish mobile optimization for your current or projected project, please contact your NBIZ sales representative to discuss this opportunity. **N**

Stan Michaels has created numerous websites for many companies, and is now consulting with business owners on mobile strategies. He is available through NBIZ Magazine.