QR Codes:

How Law Firms Can Use Them Effectively

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QR codes are another way you can use technology to reach your clients and potential clients.

You have probably seen these square codes appearing on signage around town and in retail stores. Well, they actually have a very important marketing function - one that should make law firms sit up and take notice.

Quick Response Codes, also known as QR codes, are starting to appear on the Web sites of law firms, as well as business cards of lawyers. QR codes are two dimensional bar codes that can be read by cameras on a Smartphone. The codes contain information in electronic format that the firm wants to convey to a target audience. The effectiveness of the QR codes can also be tracked at any level of a marketing campaign.

We expect to see the number of law firms using QR codes expand dramatically during 2011 as the technology continues to evolve and savvy law firms recognize the benefits.

Possible Uses for QR Codes by Law Firms

QR codes are read by a Smartphone equipped with a compatible code reader. A few examples of how law firms may want to use QR codes today include:

- Open a URL to:
    - Web site
    - Video
    - Article
    - Alert or newsletter
    - Promote an event
    - New service area (e.g. practice areas or class action law suit) for target markets
- Open a Vcard or otherwise provide contact information (saving the user time and eliminating possible errors in rekeying)
- A message
- Dial a number

Law firms may want to print QR codes on:

- Business cards to electronically transfer the attorney's contact information and the firm's Web site URL
- Event invitations / materials / lanyards to direct the user to an electronic version of the material, or additional information
- Web sites, micro sites, blogs to open a browser directly to that page
- Printed materials, opening a browser to an online version of
  - Attorney profile
  - Practice area description
  - Directories
  - Articles, alerts, newsletters
- Advertisements opening a browser to additional related information

Note:

- Be sure that the code you create is Smartphone / mobile friendly for the reader
- Test the code with various devices for readability on the media where it will be displayed (monitor, paper, signage, etc.)
- Be sure the code is large enough to be read

Generating QR Codes and Tracking

There are many free applications online to generate QR codes. But testing is critical! We tried generating QR codes on many sites and found that several were not readable once the code was generated.

Google has a free service at http://goo.gl, a URL shortener and QR code generator in one step. We found it worked extremely well.

We were also successful in generating readable codes at http://www.mobile-barcodes.com. They offer a code generator free of charge and it is very easy to use. However, they don't appear to offer a tracking service at this time.

There are tracking services available, but you can also track use of your QR codes in www.Google.com/Analytics and http://goo.gl.

Readers

Recognizing the growing use of these type of barcodes, many of the newer Smartphones are sold preconfigured with QR code readers, such as Samsung's Omnia II devices and all Sony Ericsson handsets.

As of this writing, we have had the best success with the QR reader from NeoMedia™ Technologies, Inc. called the Neoreader at http://neoreader.com Additional readers you may find useful can be found at http://www.mobile-barcodes.com

It is important to select a reader that is compatible with your Smartphone. Mobile-Barcodes also provides a list of compatible readers on their site under Supported Mobile Phones.

To read/scan a QR code, simply open the reader on your Smartphone, point your camera lens toward the code and center the QR code in the scanning window. Your Smartphone should beep or make another noise when it recognizes the code, and then act on the message inside the code (open a browser, create a contact, etc.).

Other Formats / Microsoft Tags

According to a December 2010 press release from NeoMedia Technologies, Inc. setting forth their predictions for this technology in 2011, "Industry agreement on open standards and interoperability will continue to grow, leading to convergence towards standard mobile code symbology in the form of QR codes."

Microsoft has developed Microsoft (MS) Tags which allows you to generate a standard black and white code or one using your custom colors/logo. However, because it is a unique format, we have not found it readable by readers other than the Microsoft reader. The MS reader can be found at http://gettag.mobi. A list of MS reader supported mobile phones can be found at http://tag.microsoft.com/resources/mobile-support.aspx

MS Tag Example. Below is an example of a customized MS Tag which will open a Vcard for Donna Erickson, President of Erickson Marketing, Inc.:

Get the free mobile app for your phone
http://gettag.mobi

CONTACT

For assistance with implementing QR codes in your firm, business development and marketing, coaching or other initiatives, contact Donna Erickson at 612-669-5548 or Donna@EricksonMarketingInc.com