

Code Read

Brace Yourself for the Barcode Barrage



Well, what do we have here? Is that a QR code campaign delivering **exclusive content for FOX shows** like *Glee* and *Fringe*? And do I see a **Campbell's sweepstakes** where consumers enter by scanning their soup can UPCs? While, over here, I could've sworn I caught a **Kelley Blue Book window sticker**

equipped with QR codes, allowing car salespeople to keep the same sticker in the window even when the price fluctuates. With everyone from beer brands to magazines to sports teams loading up these little squares with data, it looks like we've got ourselves a full blown barcode party on our hands, to which we say...

Well it's about time you all showed up! See, we at Upshot have been hanging around the QR code punchbowl for years, checking our watches and nibbling on hors d'oeuvres while wondering what's taking everyone so long to get here. (We've even used the codes in **our own agency campaigns**.) But, that's given us plenty of time to get acquainted with the breadth of barcode applications, understanding what works and what doesn't. We already went ahead and qrushed the topic of QR codes in a recent 15-minute Smartshot webinar (accessible by scanning the QR code above), so let's head in to the party! Look for the balloons out front.

(Of course, the best way to get into this shindig is to try scanning some codes yourself. If you don't have a barcode reader for your smartphone, shoot The Source a message and we'll point you to one that you can download for free.)



While we prefer the flexibility and broad compatibility of QR codes, we're admittedly using them as a proxy for all kinds of barcode marketing applications. It really doesn't matter whether you implement a smartphone app that reads traditional UPCs or a code like JagTag that doesn't require a

reader. What's important here is that **barcodes should be driving consumers to compelling, valuable information when scanned, regardless of the format.** Ultimately, these codes are just an efficient way to connect consumers to a wide range of content on the mobile web, whether it's a link to the Double Rainbow YouTube video, the Double Rainbow remix mp3, a coupon for the Double Rainbow t-shirt, a calendar link to Double Rainbow viewing parties... you name it. **The codes are not campaigns on their own.** The real consumer interaction comes after that code is scanned and engaging content is delivered, much like the true measure of a party's greatness isn't what's on the invitation, but how early the karaoke machine gets broken out. For instance, the QR code to the left will take you to an awesome art installation, in which portraits of classic movie stars are made out of a series of barcodes. When *those* codes are scanned, they play various video clips from their respective repertoires. Now that's one heck of a barcode blowout! (Hint: linking your QR code to your company's bland homepage probably makes for a crappy party.)



These data-laden codes are ideal for any products where the consumer experience can be enhanced by accompanying information and education. For instance, there's a lot to talk about when it comes to wine: food pairings, terroir, blends, vintages, and how to properly mock anyone garish

enough to order a California Merlot in public. But, even for oenophiles, that's a lot of stuff to put on the outside of a bottle. We've seen some brands try to get around this with bottle neckers, in-store media, packaging, and more, but none of these options really allow for the full story to be told. Compare that to the smartphone apps that **Constellation Wines has developed** for its brands, which include barcode-scanning capabilities. When consumers scan the UPC on the bottle, they're linked to everything from reviews to tasting notes to streaming videos about the wineries. It helps that these apps also build personalized profiles for the consumer, since it gets a little tricky to remember your favorites halfway through a tasting session. Just ask Edina and Patsy (they're waiting for you behind the QR code above).

Like the Best Buy example we covered in our Smartshot webinar, Constellation bakes the barcode readers right into their branded smartphone apps (along with other features). We think this is particularly crafty, and not just because it circumvents the problem of whether consumers have already downloaded barcode readers to their phones. When users scan the codes using the branded app, that marketer can exert more control over where that user eventually ends up. In Best Buy's case, the retailer can link to movie and video game trailers, coupons, installation instructions, their Twelpforce staff, and more, without worrying that the barcode will take their shoppers to an online competitor. And this approach isn't just beneficial for retailers; imagine how much more control a brand could exert over its shopper marketing programs via a similar technique.



In the end, it really doesn't matter which code format your brand pursues. What's important is recognizing the value of **augmenting consumers' real-world experiences with rich, immersive, online content.** It's part of the Online-Offline Convergence that is changing our consumers' everyday experiences, and which happens to be another party that we've been crashing for a long, long time. Now that you know the code for the door, we do hope you'll join us. We even left you a special message hidden - where else? - in the QR code to the left.

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