



Personalized QR codes the "Buy Now" Button on your Direct Mail

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Personalized QR codes

One inherent aspect of direct mail is that it requires the customer to take action – to do something in order to respond to your offer:

- Call an 800 number
- Go to a website
- Mail in a donation or order

It takes time and effort for the prospect to respond, which can be a barrier in the sales process. Emails or websites can easily include a “Buy Now,” or “Learn More” button or link where the prospect can immediately make a purchase or at least receive an additional marketing message or gather more data.

You can’t really put a “Buy Now” button on a direct mail piece. Typically, the mail piece comes into the house where it may be set down on a counter and forgotten. Even if you mail the right offer to the right person at the right time, the barrier to an immediate response exists – it may not make it from the mailbox to the next step in the buying process. But, with a QR code you can print that “Buy Now” button right on the mail piece. It’s an easy and instant response path.



People Scan QR Codes – A Lot

The objective of including a QR Code (or even more than one) on a mail piece is to boost response by providing an additional response channel. Once the QR Code is scanned the mail piece has done its job. The buying or giving experience continues online from that point.

Do people scan QR Codes? Yes! The pandemic made the public much more aware of the purpose of the QR Code. At the same time, both Apple and Google added QR Code reading capabilities to the cameras on their mobile devices. Special reading apps are no longer required.

Consumers are using QR Codes to view restaurant menus, make touchless purchases and obtain additional product information in a variety of settings. More than 50% of US consumers prefer QR Code menus and 41% of US Consumers are open to using QR codes for touchless purchases. According to eMarketer, 45% of US shoppers have scanned marketing QR codes to make a purchase.

QR codes are recognized and appreciated by consumers – if you include a QR code on a mail piece, people will scan it.

QR Code Basics

The QR code is a mobile-friendly barcode, and like all barcodes it is fundamentally a font. It allows alphanumeric characters as well as the special characters needed to create a URL – a web address. The QR code format will allow you to include more than 4,000 alphanumeric characters. We don't suggest doing that – but you can.

QR Codes are specialized 2-D barcodes. Essential characteristics:

- The QR code is generally a pattern of markings in a square.
- Three of the corners have a box in them – this helps scanners identify the code.
- The more data carried in a QR code, the greater density of dots in the code.
- QR Codes with heavy density may become more difficult to scan, requiring a physically larger QR Code to accommodate all the data.



QR code

SCAN CODE



SCAN QR CODE



SCAN ME

SCAN ME



Altering the Appearance of a QR Code

The basic, most common, QR Codes are black squares on a white background. They are seldom considered aesthetically pleasing, but their distinctive appearance makes them easy for customers to identify. There are some proprietary systems offering variations such as:

- Alterations in design and color – perhaps round dots, or even a round QR Code.
- “Frame” QR Codes that allows you to print your logo or other artwork in the center.

Whatever the variations in appearance, the basic mission of the QR Code remains the same – to direct a user to a specific website. Whether colorful, round, or framed, the same reading technology is at work. The key element is what is encoded in that QR Code.

Insight: Over 80% of US-based QR code users said that they think QR codes are safe.



The Power of the URL

A URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is a web address...and then some. A simple URL might be:

<https://www.snailworks.com>

If you go to this URL you will go to SnailWorks' home page. Everyone going to that link will go to the same page. Most preprinted URLs take you to a static web page. More often than not, it will be a landing page designed specifically for the offer you are scanning. There may also be some values after the URL that will let the owner know which marketing effort a lead came from.

In the case of direct mail, different versions of the mail piece may include different information after the main URL to send customers to landing pages more aligned to the interests of the prospects. A university may direct prospective students to a landing page with images of test tubes with content that focuses on science for students identified with an interest in science, while there may be an image of a musical instrument for those prospects identified as having an interest in studying music. None of this would be apparent from looking at the QR Code – only by scanning the QR Code and seeing where it directed you.

A Unique Landing Page for Every Prospect

Just as a URL may add value to deliver prospects to a particular kind of page, ink jet printing technology makes it possible to embed a unique URL on every mail piece. So, if Joe is interested in a science major, his QR code will include the science images and may have a personalized message for him on the landing page. If Joe chooses to learn more about the opportunities at the school, when he clicks on "Tell me more," his information will be prepopulated – all he needs to do is click "Yes." This can also be an opportunity to gather more information about Joe and better tailor your future messaging.

Whether Joe asks for more information or not, because his URL was unique to him, you will be able to identify that Joe did visit, and what his activities were on your landing page. This could be the beginning of a targeted campaign to get Joe to enroll.

PURLS Example



JoeSm23.school.edu

PURLS versus QR URLS

Unique URLs have generally been referred to as PURLs – a Personalized URL. Traditionally, a PURL is designed to be easy and engaging for the prospect to remember and enter into their web browser. If the landing page URL is “school.edu.” the PURL may be “JoeSm23.school.edu.” Hey, that’s kind of cool – his name is right in the URL...sort of. It is usually difficult to include the full name, and most prospects are more aware of these techniques today. They may not be as intrigued by seeing their name in a PURL. More likely, if they are interested, they will just enter “school.edu.” This may get them to your landing page, but you lose the ability to track who they are and where they come from.

A QR Code URL – we’ll call it a QR URL, offers the advantage of not being immediately obvious that the QR Code is unique. You can still gain all the advantages of a PURL – trackability, ability to personalize and prepopulate the landing page without being as obvious. Stylistic enhancements aside, all QR Codes look more or less alike.

Because a QR URL isn’t seen by the recipient – it’s encoded in the QR Code – the URL doesn’t need to be as “human-friendly.” A simple string of seemingly random-looking characters is just fine.

Whether a PURL, a QR URL, or any other kind of personalized URL (don’t forget your emails!) the objective is to direct a prospect to a landing page as specifically targeted to them as possible.



The Mechanics of Personalized URLs and QR Codes

Creating unique URLs can be surprisingly simple. A few things to keep in mind:

- If a personalized QR code is printed on a mail piece, you need to be able to associate that code with the specific person on the list.
- If you are using other personalized URLs, such as printed PURLs or links in an email, not only do you need to associate those with a specific person, but also track which PURL or QR URL the person used.
- If you want to create PURLs (human-friendly URLs), you need to set up rules as to how the name or other characteristic will be integrated into the PURL – this can get complicated with long or common names.

One of the simplest ways to create unique URLs is with the SnailWorks QR code generator built into SnailWorks mail tracking. Once you have created a mail tracking job, you simply select from the pull-down menu within the job, select “Generate QR URLs.” From there you simply enter the target URL for your landing page (<https://school.edu>) and click on the “Proceed” button. The system will send you a file that includes a unique URL for each record that you can print as a QR code on the mail piece. If you wish, the system can also generate PURLs (you can set the rules) and any additional unique URLs for email or other channels. Ask your SnailWorks Project Manager for details.

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Printing QR Codes

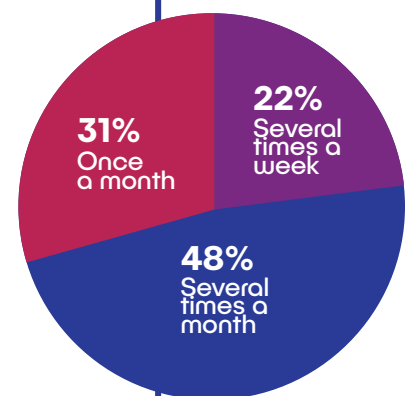
Once you have created the unique URL to be embedded in a QR code, the last step is printing the QR code. There are numerous QR code printing applications available to mail service providers offering digital printing. With digital printing each QR code can be varied as easily as a name or any other barcode. A few considerations to keep in mind:

- The longer the URL you use, the bigger the data payload in the QR code, which requires more dots. A higher density of dots can make scanning more difficult, so work to keep URLs no longer than needed.
- Place the QR code in a prominent position, so it is apparent that it relates to the offer on the piece.
- Make the QR code large enough that it is easy to scan. Test it!
- Include simple instructions to use the QR code – always a good idea, and a requirement for most Postal promotions. “Scan to learn more about our school.”

Insight:

- The worldwide redemption of QR code coupons is set to reach USD 5.3 billion by 2025, showing the potential of QR codes in marketing and sales.
- Black is the most preferred color for QR codes, chosen by 85% of users.
- An estimated 89.5 million Americans are expected to use their smartphones to scan QR codes by 2024.

QR Code Users In The U.S.



Get Personal with QR Codes

Creating unique URLs adds response opportunities to a mailing or multi-channel campaign. It really is like a “Buy now!” button on the mail piece.

With a personalized QR code you can:

- Give your prospects another, easier path to respond.
- Coordinate multiple marketing channels with variations on a landing page.
- Personalize and prepopulate the landing page for each prospect.
- Gather more data on every visitor to your landing page – what channel they responded to, when they visited, and specifically who the visitors were.

Choose the Right Partner:

SnailWorks Mail tracking, Personalized URLs & QR ULS, Informed Delivery and related services are essential for anyone managing direct mail programs, however, it's not always easy to bring them all together. SnailWorks tracks billions of pieces of mail each year. We offer tracking solutions designed to work with anyone in the mail value chain – mail owners, production agencies, consultants, and print and mail providers. Every mail effort has unique requirements and can benefit from the intelligence mail tracking and related services.

SnailWorks is the perfect partner, offering:

- World-class mail tracking
- Unmatched expertise in all phases of mail and mail tracking
- Account organization, including views that allow each party to see their data
- Affordable plans
- Informed Delivery support with creating and tracking campaigns and helping clients save on costs with USPS discounts
- Unparalleled service, reporting, and proficiency

