

# THE LIGHTNING FLASH

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The newsletter from Lightning Labels, the leader in digital label printing

[WWW.LIGHTNINGLABELS.COM](http://WWW.LIGHTNINGLABELS.COM)

## QR codes add new dimension to marketing promotions

Think of QR (Quick Response) codes as barcodes on steroids. Part of the barcode family, QR codes can handle much more data than the standard barcode, enabling them to handle more complex tasks such as opening a web page, downloading a coupon or contact information, developing an email or text message, or pulling up a video. In part, this is because QR codes are considered two-dimensional, while basic barcodes are one-dimensional.

Many modern smartphones can scan QR codes with the download of a free reader app, making them a very useful marketing and promotional tool to attract people on the go.

While complex in capabilities, QR codes are simple to open. With a smartphone such as an iPhone, BlackBerry or Droid, simply take a photo of the code with a bar code reader (such as [ScanLife.com](http://ScanLife.com) — easy, free and fast to download), and get automatically directed to a website or other contact point. Even those without smartphones can do it. Simply take/save a JPG of the code, then upload into a program such as the [Zxing Decoder Online](http://Zxing Decoder Online).

QR codes have been around since Toyota subsidiary Denso-Wave created them in 1994. At first, they were used for tracking parts related to vehicle manufacturing. Commonplace in Japan, QR codes are just now taking off in the US.

### How companies can use QR codes in promotions

QR codes can supplement label information and add product value, creating innovative marketing and promotional campaigns.

For firms of any size seeking marketing innovations, the QR code can be a perfect fit. Place one next to products on a website containing all product details, contact information, and a link to relevant information. Or add one to a business card, so that anyone can scan it into their cell phone.

Or, add them to packaging, labels, print ads, flyers, posters, and invitations, — the list is limited only by the imagination. Information can include details about contacts, products, offers, events, and competitions; or contain a coupon, or link to a social media profile.

### Examples of creative QR coding labels and more

Lightning Labels has printed QR code stickers for The Data Liberation Front, a Google engineering team wanting to make it easier for users to move their data in and out of Google products. Their rationale is that anyone should be able to export any data contained in a product.

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## From the Desk of James Lowry



### EXPLORING QR CODES

How can QR codes help you? After learning about what they are and how they work, coming up with creative ways to use QR codes to improve your company's sales and marketing is a new opportunity. Now, through using this technology, the door is wide open to provide more information about a particular product, promotional offer or your company.

QR codes are only one of several types of 2D barcodes, yet they are the most popular worldwide. Currently, the US is somewhat behind Asian and European countries in implementing new ways to use QR codes. Capitalizing on their seemingly unlimited uses and flexibility is gaining ground here as well, though.

We talked in last month's newsletter about product label design; using a QR code will definitely have an effect on this as well. For example, how much information you want to include will influence the size of the code. (Codes can carry as few as 35 characters or up to 7,000 numeric characters). The size of the code will, of course, take up real estate on your labels and has to be considered when designing them. Plus, until the US consumers become savvier about using QR codes, you will want some human readable content with information about what is on the code printed on the label as well.

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# QR codes add new dimension to marketing promotions

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Anyone with a smartphone camera and barcode scanning application installed could scan the code, to be directed to the Data Liberation Front's home page on their phone's mobile browser.

When shopping for wine in a liquor store, QR codes can make it possible to read a review about the wine on a smartphone. A Portuguese winery called Cortes de Cima has incorporated a QR code on their wine label. When scanned, the code takes the viewer to a website where people can see reviews and ratings of their wine.

Another winery, Tagus Creek, has deployed QR codes on wine labels to direct consumers to website-based videos about wine tastings.

QR codes also are enabling purchases on-the-go, maximizing convenience and minimizing the need to give credit cards to

strangers. A mobile merchant displays a QR code for a customer on a screen. The customer scans it, in turn opening a private payment window to complete and pay for a transaction without handing over a credit card.

Increasingly, airlines are offering QR-code enabled mobile boarding passes. Point, click and voila, you are taken either to a link containing your boarding pass or the pass is emailed to you. Either way, you'll be able to display it on your mobile browser. In tandem with this advancement, more and more airports are equipping personnel with special mobile-phone scanners that can "collect" the boarding pass directly from the phone.

Or, what about event badges containing important contact information that enables people to get acquainted with each other with an easy phone scan?

Then, there's the free gift offer accessible via ad or product QR

codes. Scan and win.

Also fair game are magazine ads, billboards, and T-shirts — the list goes on and on.

Another important element is the search engine factor. When QR codes are added to a website, the search engines see that pages are being changed and updated, helping SEO efforts. Direct mail aficionados also are getting into the QR code business. Direct mail packs increasingly carry the codes, which recipients can scan to see promotions, discounts and the like.

## **Develop your own QR code or have LL do it for you**

To explore and test out simple QR codes, go to a free generation site such as [Zxing Project](#) or [Kaywa.com](#). Or, there's [Open Source code](#) available if you have a developer.

Once the code is generated, save it as a JPG and post it wherever you want your audience to see it.

Lightning Labels now offers an in-house QR code creation service that can complement the QR code marketing campaign

you create on your own or with the assistance of a marketing agency. Among criteria to consider when crafting your campaign include: Who your audience is, what you want them to do, how complicated the challenge is (e.g., a simple contact card versus a link to a website video), and what smartphone browser considerations need to be addressed.

We've all experienced the frustration of pulling up a web image that doesn't display correctly because it hasn't been optimized for a particular browser. If QR code enthusiasts are frustrated in their attempts to scan the code because of mobile browser issues, you could lose them permanently. This issue merits being addressed at the phone manufacturer, operating system and application levels. For example, web pages that come up fine on a BlackBerry may prove unsuitable for a Droid phone.

For more information about the inner workings of a QR code, read the "Learning about Labels" feature in this edition of the newsletter.

## From the Desk of James Lowry

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### **EXPLORING QR CODES**

QR coding is a new approach which is picking up momentum, yet it still has the advantage of being a novelty. Whether you choose to include QR coding in your primary label, or add it as a secondary label to your packaging, get creative with it. Using this as a marketing tool will not only draw customers to interact with your website, but will ultimately result in increased sales.

## Lightning Labels News

### **Get quotes, order, reorder more easily than ever**

*Visitors, customers alike benefit from LL upgrades*

In a never-ending quest to make label information-gathering and buying decisions easier, the Lightning Labels website now features a shopping cart and customer account access.

Registered users will find that placing online quotes, orders and reorders is even easier with the website's new shopping cart. Once an order is placed, registered users will be able to view order status and tracking numbers online. Plus, they will be able to view information about previous orders and update contact information.

Visitors to [www.lightninglabels.com](http://www.lightninglabels.com) can now register online, whether or not they are a customer. Of course, we will still offer no-obligation quotes for custom labels, stickers or window decals to visitors who do not want to register. For questions about using these new features, please call Customer Service at 1.888.685.2235; or email [info@lightninglabels.com](mailto:info@lightninglabels.com).

## Customer Focus

*Great Divide balances great beer with excellent treatment of its employees and the environment*



Their website trumpets, “Great Divide brews some of the globe’s most balanced yet assertive and flavorful beers.” While a host of awards and company growth of 60 percent in the last year certainly affirm that Great Divide Brewing Co.’s balancing act is working, the company also is proving well-balanced when it comes to employee treatment.

Dave Duffy, Great Divide Sales and Marketing Director, joined the company nearly a year ago to balance his 13 years of livelihood in craft beer sales with a family life. “I wanted to travel less because I now have young children, plus widen my experience and take on more roles on the marketing side with a smaller company that’s growth-oriented,” he said.

Great Divide’s corporate culture is completely tuned in to “people’s desire to have a balanced lifestyle. There is strong acknowledgment here, a willingness to invest in people desiring a balanced lifestyle,” noted Duffy. This correlates perfectly with the brewer’s credo of letting people work independently within the company instead of micro-managing every move they make.

Clearly, Great Divide’s valuing of its people has led to monetary awards along with a whole host of accolades. Summarized on the website, “These beers have landed an impressive amount of acclaim: Great Divide beers have earned 17 Great American Beer Festival medals and five World Beer Cup awards. Great Divide was also ranked eighth in

Ratebeer.com’s 2010 ‘The Best Brewers in the World’ and was ranked seventh in Beer Advocate’s 2010 ‘All-Time Top Breweries on Planet Earth.’”

Great Divide’s corporate culture

reflects the philosophy of company founder Brian Dunn. The homebrewer, international traveler and beer aficionado founded Great Divide in 1994 in an abandoned dairy-processing plant bordering downtown Denver. Back then, Denver was not on the radar for crafted beers, making Dunn’s venture a major leap of faith.

With names like Rumble, Hoss, Yeti, Hercules Double IPA, Fresh Hop and Belgica, Great Divide’s selection is eclectic — and educational. Go to their beer page and click on any brew pictured for a description, list of awards and food pairing recommendations.

From the beginning, Dunn wanted his company to emulate the “Colorado lifestyle,” a blend of adventure, recreation, and

emphasis on the values of family life and personal growth. He also maintains a commitment to environmental excellence. As explained on the website, “We are also firmly dedicated to our community, whose support has been essential to our success, and the environment, which we depend upon for ingredients and which we have a duty to protect.”

Being environmentally tuned in was a logical meeting point for Great Divide and Lightning Labels. The two companies synced up right away about the need to conserve resources and keep the environment clean.

According to Ryan Rafferty, Great Divide Logistics Coordinator, the choice of Lightning Labels seven years ago was due in part to proximity. “We wanted to keep it local and easy, avoiding fuel costs and helping to support jobs in Colorado,” noted Rafferty.

Staying together, Rafferty added, has hinged in large measure, on Lightning Labels “providing labels in a timely and cost-effective manner. They always deliver labels when they say they will, no matter what the quantity. And they offer great

price breaks.”

Currently, Great Divide works with Lightning Labels on its special limited-release beers, which require special high-quality, hand-applied labels. Regardless of whether the challenge involves machine or hand processes, Rafferty recommended, “Go with a label vendor that fits your equipment needs, understands what you’re doing, is willing to provide insight and technical support, and will work out any issues.”

Lightning Labels and Great Divide also work together on producing removable hand-applied stickers for Great Divide’s tap handles. Rafferty pointed out that Lightning Labels developed a sticker featuring just the right level of tackiness to enable easy, clean removal and application of a new one. This eliminated the need to change out the handle when introducing a new beer.

Great Divide Brewing Co. clearly strives for excellence in all facets of the brewing business, from the customer taste experience, to workforce treatment, to the appearance of its products.



# Learning About Labels

## Anatomy of a QR code

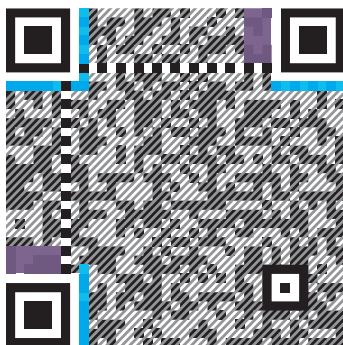
### What QR codes are:

Wikipedia describes a QR code as a, “specific matrix barcode (or two-dimensional code), readable by dedicated QR barcode readers and camera phones. The code consists of black modules arranged in a square pattern on a white background. The information encoded can be text, URL or other data. The QR code is one of the most popular types of two-dimensional barcodes. QR is the abbreviation for Quick Response, as the creator intended the code to allow its contents to be decoded at high speed.”

### What QR codes are NOT:

Difficult to learn, use and deploy.

### What they look like:



1. Version Information
2. Format Information
3. Data and Error Correction Keys
4. Required Patterns:
  1. Position
  2. Alignment
  3. Timing



While this may appear to be gobbledygook to some, a smartphone equipped with a QR code reader easily deciphers the code and gives access to the information embedded in them.

### Inside the square:

While QR codes can vary considerably in what they do and say, there are several elements that “come standard.” First is Version Information, contained in the purple shaded areas. There are 40 different QR code versions and each version is based on the amount of alphanumeric information that needs to be in the code. For example: a version 1 QR code holds up to 25 alphanumeric bits of information and a version 40 holds 4,296. Second is Format Information, contained in the blue shaded areas which also includes the positioning symbols, and enables a code to be read omni-directionally at high speeds. Data and Error Correction Keys are contained in the gray areas. And there are Required Patterns that must appear in any QR code: the square Position Patterns in every corner but the lower right; the square Alignment Pattern in the lower right; and the Timing Patterns in the black and white lines extending between the Position Patterns.

### Where to download free QR code readers:

You can Google “free QR code reader downloads” to find readers

like [KAYWA Reader](#), Nokia Reader, i-nigma Reader, Lynkee Reader, UpCode, QuickMark, [SnapMaze](#), BeeTagg, NeoReader, [ScanLife](#), and MobileTag. Just make sure the reader will work with your smartphone operating system. If you want to download a reader that can handle both QR codes and the more conventional UPC barcodes, check out our own Christy Correll’s favorite: [Redlaser](#) for both iPhones and Android phones.

### Create your own QR code:

And what if you actually want to create and deploy QR codes as part of your company’s marketing, promotion and operations? For simple codes, there are free downloads. If you have a seasoned developer available, creating a QR code in-house is certainly an option.

This is one area where the early bird truly catches the worm, as QR codes are exploding on the scene in dynamic new ways that set proactive companies apart from the crowd. Of course, there are also less desirable deployment options that merit attention before orchestrating a campaign.



## Benefits of Using QR Codes

- Attract customers on-the-go
- Drive more mobile traffic to your website
- Create cutting-edge marketing campaigns
- Add value to your product labels
- Provide access to a wealth of information using minimal space

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