



# Now That's **Smart** Marketing: Law Firms & **QR** Codes

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By now you may recognize QR codes—modern-day scannable barcodes—with increasing frequency as you go about your daily activities. Coined for “quick response,” these two-dimensional black and white codes contain information that can be scanned and read by smartphone cameras equipped with compatible readers. Whether you are at home, in the office or out shopping, QR codes are everywhere: on business cards, magazine ads, cereal boxes, in catalogs, the list goes on. And it seems target audiences are reacting with curiosity. Many industry trend reports and blogs are reporting significant increases in QR code scanning year over year.

According to [Nielsen](#), by early 2012, a majority of U.S. mobile subscribers were smartphone owners, hence there is a great marketing opportunity for the legal industry in mobile technology. QR codes are an innovative yet inexpensive way for law firms of all sizes to use smartphone technology to reach clients and prospects. They help firms promote key messages and other important information via electronic format. A July/August 2011 survey by [Vizibility](#), which delivers mobile business cards and other online identity management solutions, found that at the time, 35 percent of legal marketers had already used QR codes and 80 percent planned to use them within 12 months. King & Spalding created a winning strategy—using QR codes in marketing materials was just one tech-centric marketing practice that landed the firm a No. 1 ranking in the annual MLF 50 contest in 2011. So if your firm is still merely watching this trend, tech-savvy competitors may quickly pass you by.

### **Possible Uses for QR Codes by Law Firms**

QR codes direct clients and prospects to the marketing destination of your choice. They should be linked to content that will be of value to smartphone users and is optimized specifically for mobile viewing. You can be creative with QR codes, but remember to adhere to the advertising guidelines set forth by the Professional Rules of Conduct applicable to your firm.

Smartphone users need Internet connectivity to open a URL embedded in a QR code, which is an important consideration for determining how and where to use your codes. Consider these scenarios where Internet connectivity is more often a problem than not:

- **Airplanes:** When flying, a traveler can scan a QR code from a sky magazine, but be unable to open the URL until the Internet connection is restored. Though most scanning programs will store the scanned URL in "history," without immediate connectivity you will likely lose a person’s interest.
- **Underground Subways:** Hardly a place for a reliable connection, using QR codes in advertising in underground transportation systems could be problematic.
- **Billboards:** Safety concerns aside, would anyone actually stop a car to scan a QR code from a billboard?

As with all marketing initiatives, measuring results is important. The effectiveness of QR code use can be tracked at any level of a marketing campaign. Some common uses by law firms today include encoding URLs that lead to:

- Law firm websites (specific pages of interest, not just the home page)
  - Attorney bios
  - Legal services pages for target markets (e.g. practice areas, industry-specific services, or details for joining a class action lawsuit)
  - Special event invitations or RSVP pages
  - Seminar announcements and seminar materials
  - New hire announcements, especially promoting lateral hires and new partners
  - News releases/media room
  - Presentation materials
  - Articles and firm newsletters
  - Career/recruiting information
  - Directions to an office
- Legal blogs
- LinkedIn profiles
- Videos on a firm's YouTube channel or website with:
  - Practice area overviews describing clients, representative matters and services
  - Attorney interviews showcasing an individual's style, personality and approach to law
  - Client success stories/testimonials
  - Recent presentations or webinars
- Published articles or news stories
- Client alerts, white papers and presentation materials

QR codes can also be designed to open attorney vCards, which store contact information on a user's phone and eliminate the chance for typing errors. Other uses for QR codes might be linking to a special message or dialing a phone number, such as a hotline.

Law firms may print QR codes on:

- Business cards, transferring contact information and a firm's website URL
- Event invitations, materials and lanyards
- Advertisements, directory listings, brochures, proposals, trade show banners, promotional items, etc., opening a browser to a/an:
  - Video on your YouTube channel or website
  - Attorney profile
  - Practice area description
  - Article, alert or newsletter
- Recruiting materials

### **Generating QR Codes and Tracking**

Today, as these barcodes have gained in popularity, there are many online resources for QR code generation—many free, others for a fee. But beware, not all applications generate readable codes! Testing and retesting prior to publishing a QR code is critical. Be sure that the code you create is smartphone / mobile friendly for a compatible reader, is of good quality and large enough to be read wherever it is displayed.

Google has a free service at [goo.gl](https://goo.gl) that works well, which is a URL shortener and QR code generator all in one. [Mobile-Barcodes](#) also generates readable codes free of charge and it is very easy to use. There are numerous tracking services available, including [Google Analytics](#) and [goo.gl](https://goo.gl).

### **QR Code Readers**

Most new smartphones are sold preconfigured with QR code readers, however, a great place to review other available free and low-cost options is the App store on your smartphone. It is important to select a reader that is compatible with your particular model. We have had success with the free AT&T Code Scanner from AT&T Services, Inc., as well as the i-nigma QR Code reader from 3GVision, and the Neoreader from NeoMedia™ Technologies, Inc. For additional help, Mobile-Barcodes provides a list of compatible readers on their site under [Supported Mobile Phones](#).

To read/scan a QR code, simply open the reader program on your smartphone, point your camera lens at the code and center the code in the scanning window. Your smartphone should make a noise confirming recognition of the code and then perform based on an encoded “call to action” (open a browser, create a contact card, etc.). To be effective, you must test readability of the code with multiple devices on the media where it will be displayed (business card, paper, signage, etc.) to ensure it works as intended.

### **Conclusion**

QR codes are here to stay, so for law firms that want to keep up with the latest in technology trends, the time is now. These codes offer a convenient yet inexpensive way to push key messages to clients and prospects, and should be strategically incorporated into your firm’s marketing plans today.

### **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](mailto:Donna@EricksonMarketingInc.com)

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Our first article on this subject, “QR Codes: How Law Firms Can Use Them Effectively” was published in March 2011 when the concept was still fairly new to the industry. It has been referenced by the American Bar Association and *Minnesota Lawyer*.