Implementing QR Codes

By Lin Laurie

I recently had a need to create a QR code for a client who wanted a code to automatically create an email with content to send to a hair stylist at Google to request a hair appointment. I knew about them but had never created one before so I thought I would write about it as I did it and share my experience with others.

What Are QR Codes?

QR Codes, or Quick Response Codes, are a type of smart bar code. A bar code is basically a machine-readable optical label that contains information about the item it is attached to. QR Codes do much more and have been around since the early '90's. They were first used in Japan's automotive industry. What is cool about them is that when read by QRC reader software located on your smart phone, they will cause an action to happen.

Traditionally, they've been used to direct people to a web site. But from its early beginnings, its capabilities have increased to the point where it can also send emails, direct users to YouTube Videos, send a PDF file, download an app from the App Store, and more.

In the past, QR Codes were found in magazines, on web sites, on airline tickets, or on other forms of advertising. But because they can store more data, including geo coordinates, URL links, text, and more, you can expect to see them on T-Shirts, in books, hats, coffee cups, and pretty much anything you can imagine.
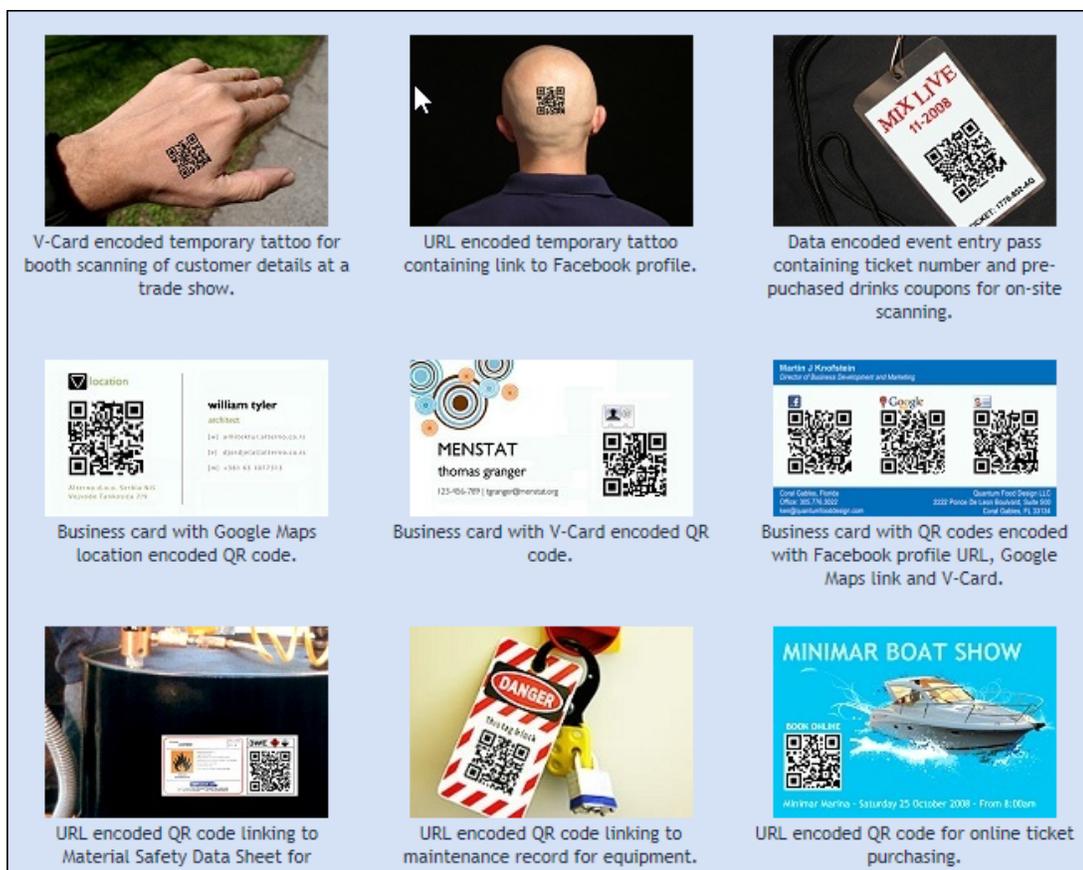

Figure 1: Examples of some ways QR Codes can be used.

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Another feature offered by QR code software are analytics. You can track the effectiveness of you add campaigns, call-to-action messages, web site activity, and more. You can find sites that will let you generate QR codes for free, but you must pay for an account that provides metrics. To see an example of the types of analytical information available from www.qrstuff.com, go to https://www.qrstuff.com/images/analytics-global.pdf. You can also use Google analytics with this software.

My Project Details

For my project, we didn't care about tracking the effectivity of the code so we chose a free site, https://www.qrstuff.com/, to generate our code. I looked at some other sites and they wanted you to enter into a 30-day trial, whereas this site just let you generate the code with no requirements to enter any details about yourself.
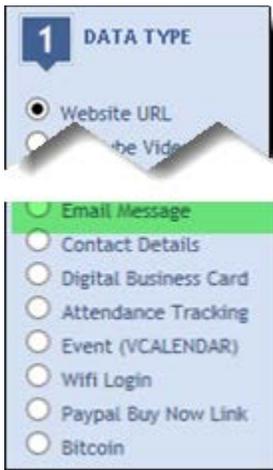
Another nice thing about this site is that they make it really simple to create your codes. Follow the numbers on the front page to create your code.

Creating My Email Message QR Code

1. Navigate to the site, https://www.qrstuff.com/.
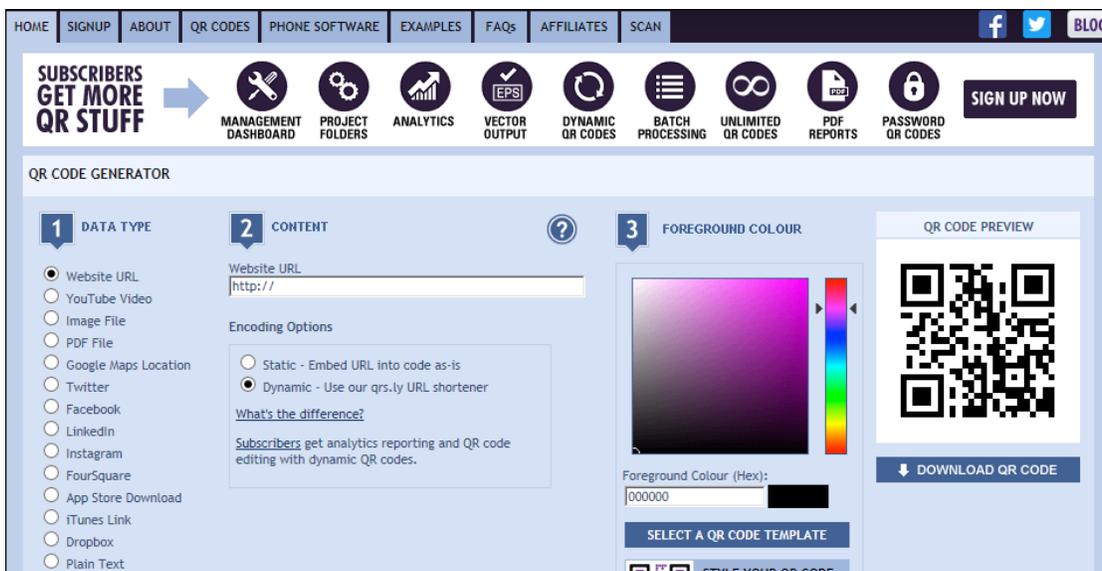
2. Select the data type from a long list. I selected Email Message for my project, but you can see from the graphic that there is a very long list of data types that you can select.

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DATA TYPE

- ⦿ Website URL
- ○ ...be Vide...
- ○ Email Message
- ○ Contact Details
- ○ Digital Business Card
- ○ Attendance Tracking
- ○ Event (VCALENDAR)
- ○ Wifi Login
- ○ Paypal Buy Now Link
- ○ Bitcoin

3. Enter data into the fields in the Content section of the QR Code screen.

2 CONTENT

Enter the email address that you would like the email to be ser
to (which will usually be the owner of the QR code) and the
subject and body of the email that you would like the person
scanning the QR code to send to that email address.

Email Address
`MB@corpcuts.salon` **a**

Subject
`I'd like to book a hair cut with you.` **b**

Body
Hi MB,

I would like to get your calendar link so I can book a hair
appointment with you. **c**

Thanks!

Encoding Options

⦿ Static - Embed URL into code as-is **d**
○ Dynamic - Use our qrs.ly URL shortener

What's the difference?

Subscribers get analytics reporting and QR code
editing with dynamic QR codes.

a) Enter the email address where the email you're creating where go to. I entered the email address of the stylist at Google.
b) Enter the Subject that you'd like to appear in the email that is generated. This way every email you receive from anyone using the QR code will have the same subject.
c) Enter the Body of your email. This will save the QR Code user time as all they'll have to do is scan the code and click Sent. MB will receive the email and will be able to respond to it and quickly set up appointments with the requester.

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d) Check Static for the Encoding Option. If you want to understand the differences between Static .vs Dynamic, you can click the "What's the Difference?" link to learn more.

e) Go to Step 3 on the QR Code Generator screen and select a Foreground Color, if you want one for your QR Code.

Note: I chose purple as an example to show you what the code would look like if you selected a different foreground color. However, for my project, I used black, the default color. The reason for my choice has to do with contrast. Black, on a white surface provides the most contract, therefore is the easiest for QR Code reader software to recognize. The lighter your color choice, the more difficult it wil be for the reader to recognize and perform the coded actions.

4. After selecting your color, you can click the Download QR Button below the Preview window, or move down to Step 4, Output Type and select a different output Type before downloading your code.

5. I downloaded my code and received the following message:

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Open A Subscriber Account From $7.50/month to receive:

∞ Unlimited dynamic and static QRcodes

∞ Unlimited monthly QR code scans

∞ Unlimited dynamic QR code editing

📈 Analytics reporting and Google Analytics integration

[EPS] Vector (EPS, SVG, PDF, DXF) or hi-res JPG or PNG output

☰ Batch processing for bulk QR code creation

✖ Management dashboard with project folders

📄 Download reports in PDF and CSV format

🔒 QR code scheduling, pausing and password-protection

| NO THANKS | YEP, SIGN ME UP | MORE INFO |

☐ Don't show me this again

6. Click No Thanks to generate a free code.

What do you want to do with qrcode.46331290.png (908 bytes)?
From: qrstuff.com   Open   Save   ∧   Cancel   ✕

7. When you receive this download message, click Save, and then place the image in a document or email.

New Stylist at Corp Cuts Hair!

Join us in welcoming Mary Beth Logsdon as our newest associate at Corp Cuts. Mary Beth will be working at both Fremont and Kirkland Google locations, so you can schedule an appointment with her at either location at your convenience.

Mary Beth's Schedule:

- Seattle (Mon. and Tues. and possibly Friday by appointment only).
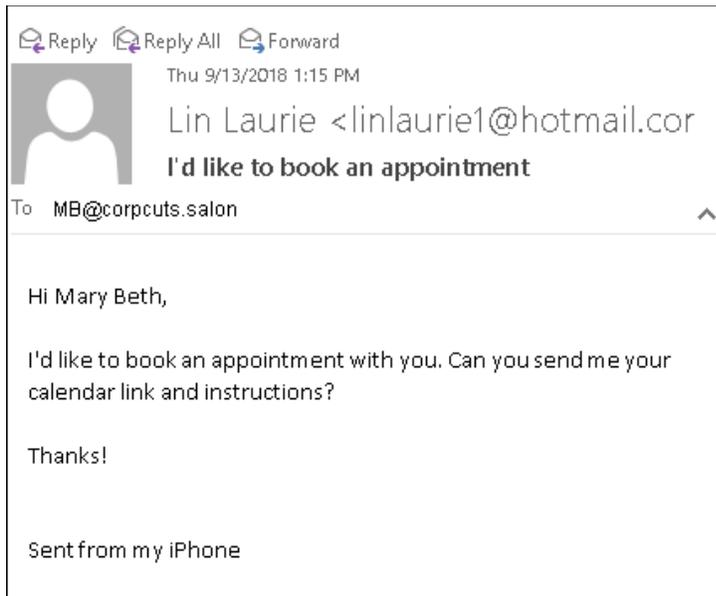- Kirkland (Wed. and Thurs.)
  If you can't find time on Mary Beth's calendar, email her at marybeth@corpcuts.salon and she promises to find time and get you in within a week.

QR Code Generates Email

Use this handy QR code to email Mary Beth for her shared calendar link so you can schedule your appointment with her. It automatically generates an email and all you have to do is click send.

8. Use your own QR Code reader on your cell phone to test your code.

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Reply Reply All Forward

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Lin Laurie <linlaurie1@hotmail.cor

I'd like to book an appointment

To   MB@corpcuts.salon

Hi Mary Beth,

I'd like to book an appointment with you. Can you send me your calendar link and instructions?

Thanks!

Sent from my iPhone

The example above is a copy of what is generated after the QR Code is generated. I had to send it to my own email account to be able to be able to take a screen shot of it because it is generated on a smartphone and sent to the person you listed when you generated the QR Code.

Other Data Types

After generating the code for my client, I decided to browse some of the other more notable Data Type options. Many of them require paid subscriptions. This makes sense for some of them, like the image file and the PDF because they require storage of the files on the site's server.

Here are a few Data Types that I thought were cool ad deserved special mention:

- **Facebook** – You can choose to link to a Facebook page or create a Facebook Like. I think this is an awesome way to quickly get people to Like your page and I can see using this myself to generate more activity on my own business Facebook page.
- **LinkedIn** – You can share either a LinkedIn Profile or select a LinkedIn Share.
- **App Store Download** – This option will direct users to the App Store link that matches their smartphone type. You have to add links to every App Store where your app is available so there is a little setup work involved, but this is a very cool way to help people get your app quickly and easily.
- **Telephone Number** – If you want to get cute, you can use this option to quickly pass your phone number onto people you want to connect to. So, I can see a social and a business reason for this option. Try it and have some fun with it. You could put it on a web site, Facebook page, Instagram site, or other social media that accepts graphics and see what happens.
- **SMS Message** – I think this would be a great way to have people send a subscribe message to a cell number. The phone number needs to be cell number. Analytics aren't available for this data type. But I've seen this used at sales events when people want to quickly connect with potential customers. They are able to grab the customer name and cell info using a QR code. There are also expensive software apps that do pretty much the same thing, so you can implement this and save a bunch of money.
- **Contact Details** – Use this data type to send a vCard or meCard (a data file in QR Code format) containing your contact details.

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- **Digital Business Card** – I liked this idea so much that I've created one. Here is the type of info you can add to your card:

Figure 2: The information needed to create a Digital Contact.

And here is the completed QR Code. What it actually does is send a link (http://qrs.ly/l17k8i5) that will bring up the digital contact as a web page.

I liked the entire process so much that I ordered new business cards with the QR Code on the back as you can see from the image below. And I've got it up and ready to share when I go to business meetings. I'm trying it out to see if it works to share the QR code or the business card.

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Once you open the image link in your phone's browser, you can click the button next to the contact's name and an application called **evaut.me** will open in a new browser window and from there you can add the .vcf to your contacts file. You can also click the **more** option to choose a number of options, such as sending it in a text message, an email, AirDrop, add to Notes, copy to Zoom (if you have the Zoom app), and many more options.

QR Codes are easy to create and generate. I encourage you to get a QR Code reader for your smart phone, and then try using the software. Maybe you will find ways to use QR Codes for yourself or for your company.

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