



# PROFIT MATTERS

HOW DO YOUR NUMBERS LINE UP? | BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK

## Can You Learn a New Trick?

This month, we are going to learn a new skill that will help you stabilize your car count, increase your profits and help you stay the best shop in your area. One of our head coaches, Mike Haley, has been working with shop owners to help them implement QR codes. These codes were initially introduced in 1994 by Toyota to track parts in vehicle manufacturing. I must admit, I was not sure the QR (Quick Response) codes were going to be a fad or a new cutting-edge technology in mainstream business. Nevertheless, I've become a fan of this remarkable digital marketing and informational tool. Why do I find these jigsaw-looking squares so fascinating?



Before QR codes, shops used one-dimensional marketing tools to inform the customers in an attempt to initiate a call to action. Think about all the information you are trying to put on a postcard, flyer or phone directory ad to tell the story you want to convey to customers. How many times will a customer dial the wrong number or type in the incorrect website address? In the past, the tracking of how effective a promotion was could be challenging or time-consuming. With the use of the QR code today, our marketing and offering of information is limitless.

With the use of these two-dimensional QR codes, a shop is now able to transmit data, digitally engage customers and execute trackable calls to action. With a simple scan of the QR code from a smartphone, we

can provide the customer with a vast variety of information. With QR codes, your shop can connect multiple media like print, mobile and web. They can make your marketing and information interactive.

### Implementing QR Codes

How can you use a QR code? The simplest answer is *for anything*. I first started seeing these weird-looking squares on the front windows of businesses next to the store hours. When I found out that with the simple scan of my smartphone, that weird square would give me the store's name, address, phone number and hours of operation, I thought to myself, that's cool.

Then a few months later, I saw the square on the bottom corner of a postcard for carpet cleaning. The company was promoting a special offer for which

you could scan the code to your smartphone, which then sent you to a website to schedule an appointment. As usual, I was at first upset with myself that I had not thought of using this technology for

### GO ONLINE NOW SCAN THE CODE

with A smart phone search thousands of articles, videos & resources instantly.



## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

QUESTION:

**What is your biggest challenge helping baby boomer shop owners?**

**Change! Their beliefs are founded on real experience, but if that technique isn't working anymore, they won't try something else — many times until it is too late.**

Do you have a question for Chubby? E-mail him at [cfriderick@autotraining.net](mailto:cfriderick@autotraining.net).

marketing promotions and specials.

Within this last year, I have started to see the funny-looking squares more often and in more places. Real estate companies use the QR codes to list all the features of a house. My daughter just recently went on a field trip to the Smithsonian, where she could download the QR code to guide her through the museum.

We actually used the QR codes at last year's SuperConference to give our guests a digital schedule of events and attractions.

To create and read a QR code is a very simple and quick process. Most smartphones today already have the QR app stored on the phone from the manufacturer. If your smartphone did not come with the QR code app, you can retrieve one using the same process you currently use for downloading apps. Most of the QR code apps are free.

To create the actual code, you log onto a QR-code-generating site — again, most of them are free. Follow the prompts to create your personalized QR code. I like to use Bitly.com, and there are several reasons why.

The top reason on my list is, you guessed it, it's free. You simply copy and paste the URL, email address, links or text into the designated box and click on the box. Bitly will shorten the URL and create a QR code. You can then print the QR code or post it on Google, Facebook, etc. Bitly will even track the QR code, which can give you information on how many times the QR code was scanned. You can even track how many times you redeemed an offer from the QR code.

## See Improvement with Codes

Use QR codes to improve these areas:

**1. Postcards** — Each direct or acquisition mailer could be tracked for its effectiveness, and could provide a direct link to your email for scheduling an appointment.

**2. Storefront** — To provide the customer information on the location, contact information, hours of operation and directions on what to do after hours.

**3. Email newsletter sign-ups** — Build your subscriber base by having links to past issues and to email sign-up.

**4. Your early-bird drop-off sheet** — This could provide instructions, contact information for towing and other important information a customer may

need after hours.

**5. In your write-up area** — A QR code could initiate a calendar of events for your shop.

**6. Your business cards** — Save expenses and customers' wallet space by scanning a card rather than taking a card. Have a short video greeting from the owner or service manager.

**7. On displays** — Provide a link to the vendor's website, which can play a video of the product's features and benefits.

**8. At the register** — This is where you can invite customers to join your Facebook page or follow you on Twitter.

**9. In the waiting room** — A QR code could launch a video that gives customer testimonials, explains your warranties — and the list of possibilities goes on and on.

**10. To promote a contest** — Place the QR code on the giveaway or send out a registration to win.

**11. Demonstrate a product or service** — Promote your offerings.

**12. Car sales** — If you also sell cars, you could have a QR code on the windshield that gives the details of the vehicle's options and power train.

**13. On name tags** — You could have a short video bio on your service manager or other employees.

**14. On your invoices** — A short video could thank them and explain their warranties.

**15. On your equipment** — You could list the website, phone number and part numbers for servicing the equipment.

**16. Asking for reviews on Google** — Currently, a customer needs to navigate to your Google Places to write a review. You could print a QR code that takes the customer to your Google Places.

**17. In your loaner cars** — A list of things to do if you are in an accident.

According to a recent report published by ScanLife, an estimated 30 percent to 40 percent of all smartphone users have downloaded a bar-code-scanning application. The report went further to say that in 2010, there was a 1,600 percent increase in mobile bar code scanning, and mobile bar codes doubled in the fourth quarter of 2010. The study also highlighted a survey showing that 97 percent of the respondents found mobile bar codes useful in some capacity, while only 3 percent found them not very useful. Additionally, the report indicated that the top uses of mobile bar code scanning are coupons, prices and nutritional information.

With the ability to input more than 7,900 characters on one code, you are able to create a simple 1-inch-by-1-inch square that provides a customer with all the information needed to make an educated buying decision. If you think of it, this code now becomes a silent seller for you.

If you would like a list of the most popular apps and QR code generators to help you quickly implement this tool, simply click on <http://ationlinetraining.com/2012-2/> and I will be glad to forward you the information. *TM*

*Chris "Chubby" Frederick is the CEO and Founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 80 associates train and live coach over 1,000 shop owners every week to drive profits and dreams home to their families. This month's article was written with the assistance of Head Coach Mike Haley to help Motor Age Readers better utilize QR codes.*



Free Video Reveals...

## Get More Profit from Your Current Labor

- Destroying the 'fast techs make all the profit' myth.
- Where all your service profits really come from.
- The step-by-step formula for quickly determining your most profitable labor rates.



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