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Do QR Codes Work?

Does a Peruvian Swan Have a Greater Life Span than an Ecuadorian Swan?

The answer to both questions: It depends.

We hear this one a lot: "Do QR codes really work? Do people really scan them?" While we can definitively say that swans do NOT scan QR codes, it's a tougher call for people. We recently read an excellent white paper by Grizzard that addressed, sort of, this very question, based on a comparison of three years of fundraising mailings for the Salvation Army. You can [read the paper here](#), but we can sum up for you: It depends.

In this study, they put a QR code on the outside of the carrier that linked to a video. This was the only variation between the test and control. Generally speaking – very generally speaking – the presence of the QR code increased response rates, but certainly not always. They also found that on the QR code version donations often tended to be smaller. For the purposes of this study, they were not interested in how many scanned the QR code – just how the presence of the code impacted overall results. The differences in response in different markets were sometimes dramatic – in terms of both response rates and revenue.

Our own more anecdotal experience at SnailWorks has been different in several respects. We typically use the QR code as an additional response channel, another way for a prospect to reply to an offer. The Salvation Army test used it as more of a gimmick – a digital lift note, if you will. If they had an online giving page instead of a video linked to that QR code, we think they may have done better. However, the purpose of their test was simply to measure the impact of a QR code on overall response.

Our focus in QR code use is to measure how many people scan the QR code, and how many go on to act on the offer. We have found a wide array of responses, which of course largely depend upon the strength of the offer as well as the audience. Our clients have not noted, to this point, any negative impact on response rate when a QR code is included. Generally speaking we encourage clients to use QR codes as part of the response device, as opposed to printing it on the outside envelope. In some cases response has been enhanced as a result of adding this additional channel. We believe that any additional ways you can give your prospects to respond is a good thing.

We do see different audiences reacting differently as to whether they scan a QR code or not. With some scientific product clients we have seen as much as 10% of their response result from QR code clicks. On the other hand, on one mailing to 50,000 accountants we got three QR code clicks. Did the presence of the QR code hurt? No, they had excellent response – just not via the QR code. So scientists seem to like QR codes. Accountants, not so much.

Our conclusion: It depends. Including a QR code on your response device gives your prospects another way to respond using their mobile device, and mobile is undoubtedly growing. We think you are wise to test with QR codes, not as a novelty on the mail piece, but as another path for response. At least if you are using SnailWorks you will be able to measure exactly how well it performs, and maybe write a study of your own!

As to swan life span comparisons, we've got nothin'. Maybe you could Google that...

KillThisDog.com and other GURLs we love

Driving up I-95 in South Florida you can't miss it – or forget it. It's a simple billboard, no graphics. Just this simple URL: KILLTHISDOG.COM.

When we help our clients set up their landing pages, we always encourage them to pick a memorable domain name. Our rule of thumb: pick something a prospect of yours would remember if they saw it on a billboard. For our own purposes we've used HailTheSnail.com and Your-Profits.com. We think they're pretty memorable to a direct marketer.

But KILLTHISDOG.COM...Wow. The domain belongs to Pets' Broward, an animal welfare group in Broward County, Florida. You can learn more about them at <http://petsbroward.com>. But if you saw "PetsBroward.com" on a billboard, you would probably not remember to check it out when you got to a browser. KILLTHISDOG.COM? Oh yeah, that's hard not to check out. It leads to their very imaginative landing page where you learn about their cause and have a chance to give them money. You even get to choose whether to kill the dog or not. (Go ahead, kill the dog – they'll forgive you and give you a chance to donate.)

This is just a great example of the power of a good landing page and a memorable GURL. Don't just make it a variation of the domain of your web site – be bold, be memorable. Add a whole new dimension to your campaign. Need some ideas? Give us a call and we'll help!

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