QR Codes can be "stylin," and aren't going away

Is the QR code a thing of beauty, an eyesore, a flash in the pan, or your two dimensional portal to the universe? Scanning these magical barcodes with a smartphone can launch an offline-to-online experience, but they are often criticized for their black and white checkerbox appearance. Those who doubt that QR codes effectiveness are quick to point out that the look is ugly and marketers and advertisers don't want to use them.

Fortunately, QR codes can be redesigned in truly extraordinary ways, while still maintaining their scannability. The reality is, QR codes no longer have to be checkerbox in appearance. We've entered a new phase of designer codes that can be integrated into marketing campaigns in an attractive way that isn't an eyesore.

So what can we do to make your campaign even more successful?

Add color
The easiest way to add branding power to your code is to add color to it. Your QR code does not have to be standard black and white in order to be scanned. You can embed multiple colors and apply a color gradient without affecting scanability. The only rule of thumb is that the code color should generally be dark and placed against a light-colored background. You need contrast to make the code scanable.

Don't reversed out code, only a small handful of QR code readers can treat such codes as a film negative and properly interpret the data.

Using a re-direct (make the QR easier to read)
When you use the QR code with a tiny URL you can create more redundancy and the tiny little checkerboard boxes can be bigger and easier to read on a smartphone. Another plus to the tiny URL that the QR code last forever but where it goes to can change with the re-direct. Here at API-Marketing we always encourage the use of the re-direct.

Soften hard edges with round corners
One of the QR code's greatest aesthetic flaws is its numerous hard edges. You can dramatically lessen the severity of this look by strategically rounding some corners. Softening up the edges will definitely make it appear more friendly and approachable.

Use QR codes with error correction
If you decide to add in a logo to create a 3D feel for your QR code, you need to decide which part of the coding to obstruct with your logo. The key to creating these eye-popping designer codes is to take advantage of the fact that up to 30% of a QR code's data can be missing or obstructed, and still be scanned. QR codes can be generated with 0%, 10%, 20% or 30% error correction rates built in. Adding 30% error correction adds more noise (extra boxes) within the code, but those extra boxes within the code can then be removed to make way for a logo or other interesting imagery.

Fancy QR are trial-and-error
Be sure to test your code's scannability with multiple QR readers, ideally three or four. Some readers may be able to overcome some stylistic elements of your designer code. Technically, it is possible to mathematically compute which boxes in a QR code are the buffers that can be removed, but such computations are generally unnecessary. By applying a simple process of trial-and-error, anyone can begin applying their design techniques to a code and then test for scannability. Deploying your code without testing for scannability is designer malpractice and can cause serious heartache. API-Marketing will not let that happen to your design. It is true that even with reasonable precautions, designer codes may still be difficult to scan, so you must always weigh the costs of scanning difficulty against the benefits of designing a code that is eye-catching. In the end, creating branded QR codes is as much art as it is science.

Give us a call or stop by and we can share with you the "good, the bad and the ugly" of QR code design.

Your Marketing Mix can be counted on one hand

You should never close your mind to adding new ways to reach your customers. Anything that you add to the mix will be compounded by the different channels that you use. It is a FACT the more marketing channels you use, the more effective your efforts will be.

Forrester Research reports that, "marketers who have adopted multi-channel marketing practices have realized significant business benefits ranging from improved campaign performance to higher return on marketing investments." Of marketers surveyed by Forrester, 77% agree they will drive more sales and profits by evolving into an effective multi-channel marketing campaign.

Give a call or e-mail us at print@ api-marketing.com. We have the staff and knowhow to build, implement and accelerate your marketing. Spend to reach beyond your goals.
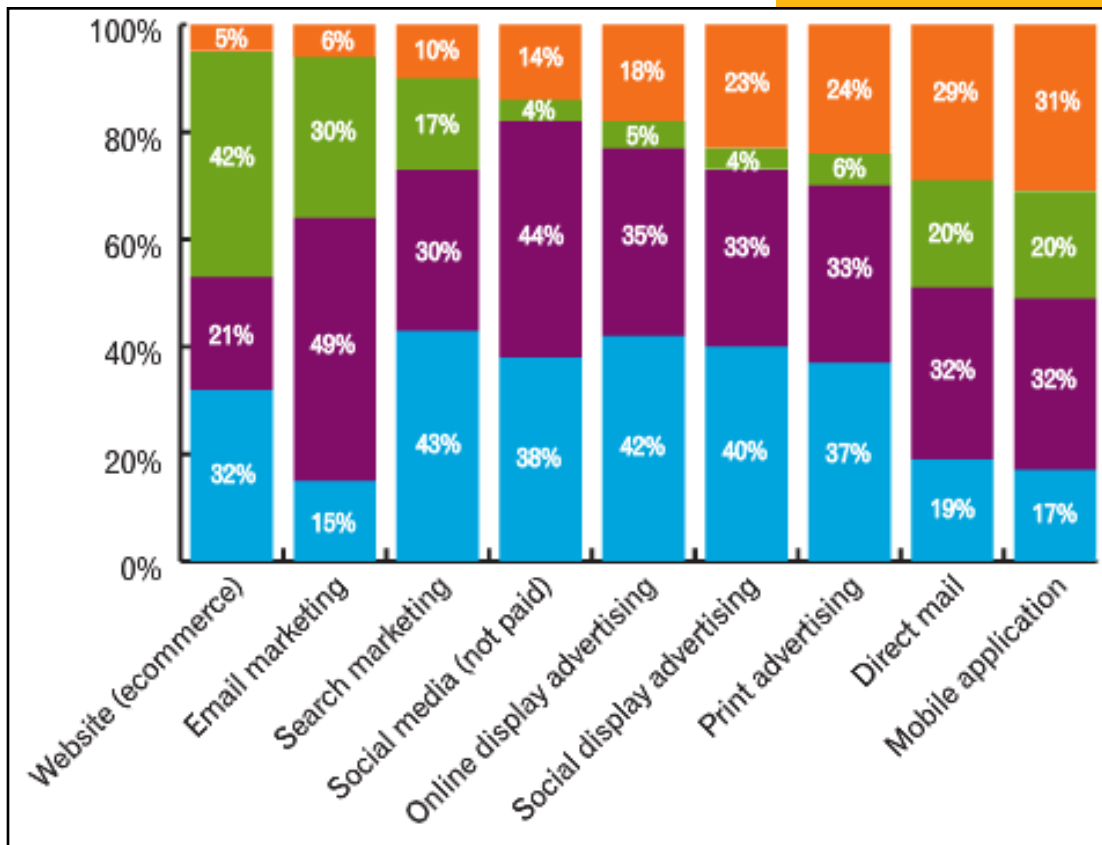
Helping Make Sweet Music

We are proud to be a partner in bringing the gift of music to young people in our mountain community. As a sponsor of Music in the Mountains, we are investing in young people, the "engine" of our future, with a focus on our youth and young adults.

This year, Music in the Mountains' Young Composers Project is in high gear, working in support of the "Prelude for Yuba Salmon" project. This unique collaboration with Sierra Streams Institute is a thrilling adventure in musicianship, composing, education and environment. There is a movement afoot by integrating arts education with support of plight of Yuba Salmon and improvement of their habitat.

We live here, we work here, and when our clients support API-Marketing we are able to support our youth and the environment that is so dear to all of us in the foothills.

Danielle Apple *Graphic Design*

Danielle joined the API team in May 2014. She is a recent graduate of graphic design from CSUS and has spent the last couple years exploring freelancing and entrepreneurial opportunities. Some of her favorite jobs include fabric designs, campaigns and corporate identity. With a solid foundation in design principles and craftsmanship, she is still always on the prowl for the opportunity to learn and experience new things, of which there appears to be no shortage here at API!

Danielle and her husband Ryan started their own business on the side, and are enjoying the prospect of making products for the activities that they love most: hiking in the Sierras with their dog Penny, four-wheeling, horseback riding, spontaneous beach trips, and quading.