

Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS



High-Seas Meetings & Incentives

**Cruise Lines Now
Offering More 'Wow'**

PAGE 12

Celebrity Cruises' newest ship, the 2,850-passenger Eclipse, debuted in 2010.

Mountain Resorts

PAGE 32

**Destination
Orlando**

Special Report for Meeting Planners

PAGE 36

Photo courtesy of Celebrity Cruises



Tom Martin

QR Codes: The Next Best Thing

How Quick Response Codes Can Create Quick Responses to Your Next Meeting

Many major national marketers are beginning to test quick response (QR) codes in their marketing programs. In fact, a 2010 study by Burson-Marsteller showed that 22 percent of Fortune 50 companies in the U.S. are actively using QR codes in their marketing efforts. And QR codes are likely to become more commonplace in marketing during 2011 and beyond. We're already seeing major retail chains such as BestBuy and Sears making use of QR codes in their advertising, which will serve to educate

two-dimensional barcodes. Other types of two-dimensional codes include JagTags, MS Tags and Stickybits. Many mobile phones in the U.S. are now starting to be equipped with pre-installed QR code reader software. For consumers who do not have the software installed on their mobile phone, there are a number of free readers such as ScanLife or i-nigma, which consumers can download for free.

Like many of today's mobile technologies, when used properly, QR can improve how you market your meeting, attendee

QR codes are something every meeting planner should be watching.

the American public and help them become more familiar with the technology. With the technology finding its way into the hands of consumers throughout the world, QR codes are something every meeting planner should be watching. In fact, the technology could just be the best thing that ever happened to your meeting.

What is a QR Code?

QR codes are two-dimensional, black and white codes that are readable by dedicated QR barcode readers and camera phones. The code consists of black modules arranged in a square pattern on a white background. The information encoded can be text, URL or other data.

The QR code was created in Japan, by Toyota subsidiary Denso-Wave in 1994 and is one of the most popular types of

networking at your event and even save you money.

How to Use a QR Code

So how can you use these codes to better market your next meeting? Here are four examples to get you started.

- **Marketing your speakers.** The single best usage of QR codes is leveraging their ability to turn print into video. So for your next meeting, edit together a highlight reel of your speakers so prospective attendees can get a glimpse of the high quality content they'll receive. This is especially useful when you're trying to save a bit of money by booking lesser-known speakers who despite their lack of name recognition are nonetheless powerful and informative speakers. *Go ahead, scan code No. 1 (right) and see what you get.*

To scan the codes with your smart phone, download a free reader at www.i-nigma.com

①



- **Mobile-friendly registration.** Research shows that we Americans love our mobile phones. In fact, they're often within 5 feet of us at all times. Take advantage of that the next time you run an ad promoting your meeting. *Include a QR code tied to a mobile friendly event registration site such as the one you'll see if you scan code No. 2.* Don't rely on your attendee to remember a phone number, or a website or an e-mail address, tear out the ad or anything else. If your ad has convinced them, book them right then and there.
- **Help attendees network.** Major meetings and conventions are as much about networking as learning. But let's face it,

costs. One of the things I always hate at conferences is the schedule. I hate carrying it with me because it's just one more thing to keep up with. Luckily, when I attended the Social Medium Tourism Symposium (affectionately known as the SoMeT) this fall, organizer David Serino of Gammet Interactive used QR codes to solve my problem. *My name badge came complete with QR code No. 4. Scan it.* You'll see how he saved a ton of trees, a bit of money and made my life a lot easier. Why not do the same for your attendees?

Regardless of how you use QR codes, the key item to remember is context. These codes are scanned by mobile phones, so

②



The single best usage of QR codes is leveraging their ability to turn print into video.

typing or scanning in all those business cards to our contacts file and then syncing with our smart phone is, well kind of a pain. Why not make it easy on your attendees? Just issue each of them a QR code when they register and print it on their name tag. Now when they meet someone they'd like to follow up with, each person needs only scan the other person's tag, and presto! a vCard appears on each person's phone. They click "save to contacts" and they're now connected. *Go ahead, try it by scanning my QR Business Card (code No. 3).*

- **Save a tree and money on printing**

make sure whatever website or content you point the code towards is mobile friendly. That is probably the single biggest mistake marketers are making right now. They include a QR code in an ad, on a piece of collateral or a sign, and that code takes the consumer to a regular website that isn't readable on a mobile phone.

These are just a few examples to get your mind turning. I promise you, there are lots of additional ways you can use QR codes in the planning and execution of your next meeting or convention. But you won't know if you don't try...so it's high time to get started. **C&IT**

③



④



Tom Martin is the founder of Converse Digital, a digital marketing firm that helps companies understand how to leverage digital tools such as QR codes to create more effective marketing. You can follow him on Twitter @TomMartin or subscribe to his blog, <http://www.HelpMyBrand.com> to learn more.