

QR Codes

Should your business be using them?

QR codes – also known as quick response codes or two dimensional bar codes – are a matrix of black patterns arranged in a square on top of a white background. The information encoded inside them is normally a web site address but it could also be contact information, text or other data.

QR codes were originally created by Denso Wave in 1994 (a subsidiary of Toyota) for tracking parts for vehicle manufacturing and assembly at very high speeds.

Since 2002, QR readers have become standard on camera phones in Japan – a market of over 80 million handsets. The rest of the world is now embracing QR codes and using them for activities such as sharing contact information, coupons and even mobile shopping.

Why use them?

QR codes are more useful than a standard bar code or a web site URL because they can be read quickly using any modern cell phone and they can store more data, including web site addresses, contact information, text, mapping information and more.

Many companies are adding them to marketing materials, business cards and store front windows to offer the following: product details; contact information; coupons; mapping information; links to Twitter, Facebook or YouTube accounts.

Reading or creating QR codes

Free readers are available for most smartphones. If you can't find a reader in the "app store" for



QR code for the Pontiac Chamber's web site

your favourite smartphone, do an Internet search for 'qr code reader' to find many choices.

Creating your own QR codes takes less than a minutes and it's free! There are many free QR code generators available. An Internet search for 'qr code generator' will give you several to choose from. One of the more popular choices can be found at <http://qrcode.kaywa.com>

Are QR codes for your business?

Remember that QR codes – and the apps than can scan them – are a new concept for most people. They are becoming more commonly used in North America but keep in mind that many of your clients may not have a smart phone, a reader and/or an understanding of what they are used for.

Make sure that the information you are sharing is appropriate for quick, mobile consumption. Although it might be easiest to link to the homepage of your web site, that's likely not the most engaging experience for your customers. Try linking to a produce page or a special promotion page with a 'buy now' or 'contact me now' call to action which will convert more visitors into sales.

This article was written by Richard Douglas, founder of Oakville.com and appeared in the Oakville Chamber of Commerce magazine *The Business Advocate*.

Exciting News about the Esso Business and Fleet Driver Program

As a business owner you may be taking advantage of the Esso discount of 3.5 cents per litre. Now you can offer the same discount to your employees.

Imperial Oil is pleased to offer the opportunity for employees of Canadian Chamber of Commerce member businesses to enroll in the Esso Business Card program. This program offers a rebate of 3.5 cents per litre on fuel purchases at over 1,850 Esso stations across Canada!

See the Chamber web site for more information and the application form.

Importance of Employee Enrolment

Most group insurance policies, including the Chambers of Commerce Group Insurance Plan, require all new, full-time staff to serve a waiting period (three months is typical) before they are eligible for benefits. The employee is eligible for coverage the first of the month following the three month wait, and the Chambers Plan must receive a completed employee application within 31 days of this eligibility date or the employee is considered a 'late entrant'.

As a 'late entrant' employees are required to complete medical questionnaires on themselves and their dependents that require approval by the insurance company before coverage can be granted (coverage would go into effect the first of the month following the date of approval). Depending on the findings, the employee and/or dependents could be declined for certain benefits or even declined coverage altogether. Even with an approved application, dental benefits for late entrants are limited in the first 12 months of coverage.

As the sponsor of the group policy, the firm is responsible for ensuring all eligible employees are enrolled in the plan. Employers who are not diligent in their enrolment procedures could jeopardize an employee's coverage and could be taken to task by the employee or the employee's estate.

As a small business owner you have many responsibilities to attend to, and it's easy to lose track of time when it comes to filling out employee paperwork for insurance coverage, especially after the initial set up of your benefits.

To protect your firm and your employee, we suggest that you complete and submit the enrollment applications when new employees are hired. The Chambers Plan will process the application with the employee's coverage commencing at the end of their waiting period. There is no need to 'remember' to enrol the employee at a future date, and premiums will only be billed when the employee's coverage begins.

The 2011-2012 Annual Report is now available on the Chamber web site.

**Think Global ... Buy Local
Support Those Who Support You
Small Businesses Make Small Towns Work!
Consider this when you're buying ...
As business operators, our actions shape our communities.**

Welcome to the Chamber!

Businesses who have joined the chamber since the last newsletter.

- Bateau Royal
- Bowers Restaurant
- Nectar
- Ringrose Funeral Home
- Social Media Co.

Check the chamber web site for links to these businesses.

Support your local businesses!

News, article suggestions and letters to the editor are welcomed and encouraged. Content will be edited to fit the space available. We welcome press releases and news from our local business community.

Chamber Benefits

Being a member of the Pontiac Chamber of Commerce means that you are also affiliated with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC) — www.chamber.ca and the Quebec Chamber of Commerce (FCCQ) — www.fccq.ca. You and your business can take advantage of benefits listed on their web sites.



Group Insurance Benefits

Visit the new web site / view the video!

<http://www.chambers.ca>

Would Like to Join the Chamber?

Membership fee of \$100 entitles you to all chamber benefits. Membership valid from April 1st to March 31st.

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