



There was a time when all a new home builder needed to do was erect a sign and place an ad in the new home section of the local newspaper. Life was so simple then. Where did those days go? In an ever-evolving world of marketing, the new tools are changing constantly. And today, if a builder doesn't keep up, he or she is going to be left behind.

The emergence of the Internet changed everything. It changed how we all communicate with each other, how we gather information and do our research, how we pay our bills and plan our vacations. And yes, how consumers search for homes. The website is a critical tool, but even that is being eclipsed as the primary gateway to information. Mobile technology is the latest and greatest gizmo available to reach your audience.

Enter the QR code (Quick Response) and Bluetooth Proximity Marketing. These newest crazes in communica-

tions promise to once again change the landscape.

First, what's at issue? Why do we even need these new devices? What was wrong with plain old advertising? Nothing, really. Print, radio and television are still critical tools that need to be part of

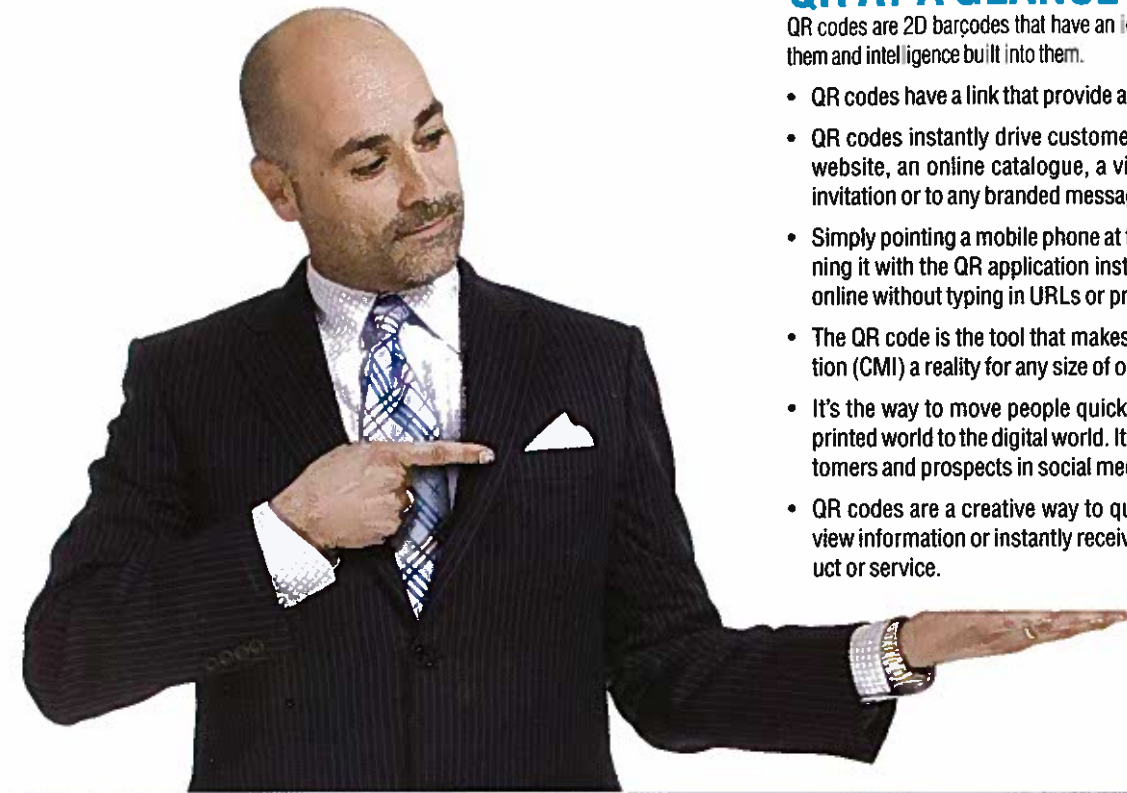
your toolkit. The challenge is that today the marketplace is so fragmented that consumers are getting their information from a variety of sources. The baby boomer is still reading the newspaper, but the millennial generation is not.

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QR AT A GLANCE

QR codes are 2D barcodes that have an identifier associated with them and intelligence built into them.

- QR codes have a link that provide an interactive tool.
- QR codes instantly drive customers and prospects to a website, an online catalogue, a video, a promotion, an invitation or to any branded message you can imagine.
- Simply pointing a mobile phone at the QR code and scanning it with the QR application instantly connects people online without typing in URLs or promotional codes.
- The QR code is the tool that makes Cross Media Integration (CMI) a reality for any size of organization.
- It's the way to move people quickly and easily from the printed world to the digital world. It's about engaging customers and prospects in social media interaction.
- QR codes are a creative way to quickly buy something, view information or instantly receive a coupon for a product or service.



TIME TO GET SOCIAL

What you need to know about social media marketing **BY MYLES LAWLOR**

Social media is working for some home builders, but for those not already in the game, it is creating a lot of angst. The following is a brief summary of the things that should be part of your marketing plan.

Google Account – If you don't have one, get it today! Go to www.google.ca/accounts. Enter your email, select a password and start checking out how to get more from your website.

Facebook.com Register and spend some time perusing the Internet's "most popular social networking site" (400 million registered users). While my 20-something children use more than Google, the fastest growing demographic was, until recently, women over 55.

YouTube.com With flip cams providing videos of your community, viewing model homes or decor centre has never been easier. Search for "home builders" to see the results.

Google Video Like Google itself, Google Video is a search engine for all videos on the web. So whether you have posted a video on your website or on YouTube, it will show up on Google Video.

Flickr.com Flickr is a great way to use still photographs, with comments, to promote your homes.

LinkedIn.com This is really the professional version of Facebook. LinkedIn demonstrates the "6 degrees of separation" inherent in any business community.

myspace.com Younger demographic than Facebook, but worth a look.

blogger.com With simple start-up instructions, you could be blogging today. Try the video tutorial that links to YouTube.com.

slideshare.net Upload your PowerPoint, Word or PD documents and videos, for free to start. Can be used for online sales presentations.

scribd.com Largest social publishing and reading site in the world. Try a search for "new home builder" and see who advertises.

twitter.com It is way too easy to open a twitter account and start participating in this real-time community. But beware, you could end up addicted to it.

mediapull.ca For links to the top 30 social media websites.

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ONLINE BUILDER

THE ESSENTIALS FOR AN EFFECTIVE WEBSITE

BY AMY TALBOT AND SOPHIE DUBE

In today's double-click mentality, few marketing tools are as powerful, instant and cost-effective as a well constructed website that engages with consumers. For builders, the website provides an ideal opportunity to demonstrate your specialized expertise and experience, and showcase your project portfolio to potential customers. The challenge, however, is that you have much less time to capture people's attention than you would with traditional marketing material. With this in mind, here are builder website essentials that should be considered to ensure a positive online experience that can drive your return on investment (ROI).

Be clear about who you are and what you stand for.

Even if you are reaching out to more than one target audience, you can't be everything to everyone. There is a need to clearly define and communicate a positioning that is different and uniquely yours, and gives your prospects the reasons to choose you. Be ready to articulate "what you do"



in 10-20 seconds by asking yourself what makes your offering the first, the best or the only, and make that visible on your homepage. By placing the focus on the benefits of doing business with your company and what you can rightfully claim to, such as what makes your homes different (most energy efficient, most innovative designs, most selection of bungalow models, etc), rather than going on and on about the history of your company, ensures users know they are at the right place within a matter of seconds.

Provide testimonials.

Past client testimonials offer prospective customers validation that your business has credibility and makes you stand out from less experienced companies. Mention of major contracts your business has won should also feature prominently on your homepage. Official logos of the various professional industry organizations you belong to, and any "green" claims or environmental policies are advantageous and should be included. Also note on your website any involvement in charity construction projects, as this is an excellent way to add positive PR, and a good way to have your community involvement picked up and run in industry blogs, news feeds and local papers.

Provide high quality, professional photography of completed work.

Pictures are worth a thousand words, and will have the emotional impact required to capture the imagination of a prospective client. However the photographs must be professional, large scale and well staged. Fewer high quality photographs are better than a proliferation of mediocre ones. Be very selective and invest in professional photography.

Provide simple navigation.

Your navigation should be a well thought-out funnel that guides prospective clients down a controlled path to key pages of your site, such as a registration page or contact us page. People

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The key for a builder, says Danny Gabriele, Vice-President of Stoney Creek-based Marz Homes, is to invest in several vehicles.

Marz Homes for example, does print, radio and television. But they've also invested in their website and, in the past year or so, dabbled in QR codes. While conventional marketing still works, the jury is out on the new technology, Gabriele admits. "It's hard to say how successful QR codes have been, but the bottom line is you have to reach out in so many different ways. If you are not there, you may be missing potential buyers."

What are QR codes? The code is a two-dimensional barcode that is often used for adding web links to a particular page on your website. When you scan the code using the camera on your smartphone, the QR reader applicator

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IS THE FUTURE.
SINCE BLACKBERRY
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takes you to a website, a YouTube video or some other web content. Basically it is a simple way of sending people a website without having to type out lengthy URL.

The technology was developed in Japan in the early 1990s for commercial application, but eventually became part of the consumer landscape and used everything from billboards to ads and brochures. The concept exploded in tech-crazy Japan and is slowly gaining a foothold in North American marketing.

"More builders are integrating QR codes to reach out to their target market," says Vanessa Delsooz, Social Marketing Co-ordinator for BAM Building Advertising and Marketing. "Builders now can offer another convenient way for consumers to learn about the

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