



AMERICAN CATALOG  
MAILERS ASSOCIATION

*Your Catalog Advocate!*

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### **Recap of ACMA's Telecon on USPS Mobile Barcode Promo**

*Note: Our email service provider experienced a technical snafu earlier today in transmitting ACMA's e-blast announcing that the Postal Regulatory Commission has approved the USPS proposal for the 3% discount for certain mail (catalogs included) that contains mobile barcodes. As a result, it's possible you didn't receive that announcement. We apologize for the inconvenience, but in a nutshell, the promotion was approved by the PRC, except that the PRC ordered that nonprofit mail also be allowed to qualify for the discount. The USPS proposal had excluded nonprofits.*

The USPS's Mobile Barcode Promotion will provide catalogers and other mailers with an upfront 3% discount on Standard and First Class mail letters and flats containing at least one scannable two-dimensional barcode (eg: a QR code). The promotion will be in effect from July 1 to August 31, 2011.

Last week, ACMA held a free teleconference to help catalogers prepare for this opportunity. Now that the PRC has approved this incentive, we've compiled a recap and primer here. **Tom Foti, manager, marketing mail for the USPS**, and **Tim Kilroy, VP of natural search and social media for PM Digital**, an ACMA member and search engine marketing provider, both spoke during the May 11 call, which included a Q&A and group brainstorming session.

In this email, you'll find three sections. The first one you can access right here. Simply [click here](#) for a USPS-provided FAQs sheet on the incentive. This will give you the details Mr. Foti discussed during his presentation. For the other two sections, see below...

## QR Code Primer

*Mr. Kilroy summarizes what he discussed during the call.*

**What is a QR (mobile) code?** A QR code (or quick response code) is a unique looking barcode that allows mobile devices to access a web URL. [Click here](#) to view a sample.

**How can I read a QR code on my phone?** There are code scanners available for every smart phone platform. Check out the Blackberry, Android, Windows or Apple App Stores to find the best ones.

**Why should catalogers & direct mailers use a QR code?** Besides the 3% discount that the USPS is offering this summer, the QR code is an ideal bridge between the print and digital worlds. Mobile codes offer smart phone users a great way to deeply interact with your content. This will lead to deeper engagement, increased loyalty, and, of course, increased demand.

**What kind of content should I direct my customers to?** That really depends, but we think the best place is to a contextually appropriate landing page that is tailored to mobile, rather than simply your home page. You're best off putting consumers on a page that offers a discount for buying through mobile, or to a how-to video to help them understand how they might use your product every day, or even to your Facebook page. Each of these pages gives them a chance to engage with you and generate value on both sides. Here's a list of some other ideas to ponder:

- Point them to a mobile web page that ascertains their location to give directions to your store;
- Point them to a PURL (personalized URL) that welcomes them by name and has personalized recommendations;
- By sending them to your Facebook page, you increase your share of "earned media";
- Enter them in a contest;
- Sign them up for an e-mail newsletter;
- Send them to a QR code-only sale page;
- Sign them up for text alerts;
- Give them a coupon for an in-store purchase;
- Point them at your loyalty program and give them a bonus for joining through mobile.

### **Are there any restrictions on how many QR codes can be put on a catalog?**

No, in fact, we think of the QR code as unique doorways into your content. You should be able to give as many doorways as you have possibilities. (Obviously, your desire for QR codes as an interactive tool should be tempered by the reality that you only have so much space on the printed page, so proceed with some caution). But we believe that those customer who engage with your brand via mobile will convert at a very high level, so once proven, the QR code opportunity

could be a great way to augment sales per inch figures.

**Where can I learn more?** First, the ACMA website has a section called “print/digital connection ([click here](#)). Wikipedia has a good definition – [click here](#) for it. And if you’d like an assessment of your strategy, or to have a discussion around how to implement this great new technology for maximum impact, I can be reached at [tkilroy@pmdigital.com](mailto:tkilroy@pmdigital.com) or via phone at (617) 500-3387.

### [Mobile Barcode Promo Q&A](#)

A transcript of the Q&A and idea-sharing comments that were made during the call.

**QUESTION:** Why is the USPS offering this promo considering it may not yield any additional revenue for the USPS?

**TOM FOTI:** Mobile barcodes are of great value and potential in the catalog industry. That in and of itself is a good reason to do it.

**Q:** Is an electronic backup file needed? Should we provide a scan of our catalog showing where QR code is?

**FOTI:** Provide electronic documentation. All mailpieces on a mailing statement must contain a mobile barcode. Samples of the mailpiece must be provided and accepted. USPS will have the right to go back at a later date if we feel it is needed to get a sample. We will periodically randomly scan some of these mobile barcodes to ensure they are active and relevant to the content of the mailpiece.

**TIM KILROY:** The QR code can be internal and external.

**Q:** In the summer sales of 2009 and last year, catalogers had to pre-register our mailings with the USPS. What do we have to do ahead of time to be eligible for the discount?

**FOTI:** Yes, previously, customers had to register and sign up. This one you don’t need to sign up. When you complete your mailing statement, in the June statement there will be a place to notify that you want to participate in the mobile barcode promotion. That’s your way of notifying us you’re participating in the program.

**Q:** By the time this program was introduced, it was too late; our print files were already submitted. But we want to take advantage of this in the future. How do we go about generating this barcode?

**KILROY:** There’s no trick to it. You can Google QR code generator and there are probably 1,000 of them. They’re a publicly available kind of thing, and can be customized or you can color them and there’s some fudge in the data so you can add a logo. There’s much you can do to make them fit on your catalog.

**FOTI:** A mobile barcode cannot interfere with clear zones on the mailpiece, such as the [IMb or postnet] barcode or address portion of the mailpiece. We do have

detailed specifications of where on the mailpiece it can be in our DMM 302. That gets into where you can't put something.  
<http://pe.usps.com/text/dmm300/302.htm>

**Q:** Would we need to have the full service IMb [Intelligent Mail barcode] to take part in the promo or is it as easy as putting it on an electronic statement?

**FOTI:** You don't need full service IMb, but you need that electronic doc of it – either a mail.dat or mail XML file of the electronic documentation.

**Q:** If we were in an offline external co-mail with other partners, would all the partners need to have the code?

**FOTI:** Every piece in a mailing statement must qualify for the discount. If half from a co-mailing don't, that entire mailing is not eligible unless you get them on separate postage statements, which may not be feasible.

**ACMA NOTE:** On the afternoon of May 19, the USPS clarified what kinds of co-mailed catalogs will qualify for its forthcoming, two-month-long incentive of a 3% discount on mail pieces containing mobile barcodes. As reported in my ACMA Journal from Thursday morning, it was unclear whether co-mailed catalogs would gain the discount unless all mailings in a given co-mail pool each had the barcodes.

Mr. Foti said that if one catalog in a co-mailing has the barcode, but another one doesn't, as long as the barcoded catalog qualifies in its own individual postage statement, that catalog will be granted the discount. Commingled, combined and co-mailed mailings are allowed and a separate postage statement is required for pieces with mobile barcodes. We'll likely have more on this in my recap following next week's Mailers Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) meetings.

**Q:** Does my entire in-home date window have to be within the timeframe of July 1-Aug 31, or can it be partially out of those dates.

**FOTI:** It will not be associated with the requested in-home dates. It'll be associated with the accepted dates. There's some confusion and we'll clarify that soon, but it's the date the mail is accepted, not the in-home date.

**Q:** Do you need space around a QR code for your camera to pick it up well?

**KILROY:** Do plenty of testing with three or four QR code readers. There are some differences between different QR code readers; there are bunches of them in the marketplace. Look at the ones that are developed by the biggest organizations. AT&T, for example, has its own branded one.

**Q:** Are there better or worse spots to place QR codes on catalogs?

**KILROY:** Plopped on your catalog cover may have less uptakes because it may be confusing. I wouldn't want to devote that kind of space. I would be more inclined to put place it beside specific products or to add it to a clearance or sale page where you promote specific items. Go for contextual rather than general, because you'll get more people to pull out their phones.

**Q:** Where should these barcodes lead people to?

**KILROY:** The real opportunity is in creating the right point of entry for your visitor. On the web, the page that converts the worst is your home page. Focus on bringing consumers as close to the information they're after as possible. Make a unique landing page that has very specific information. Our best chances of success are at the product level. If you have a premier catalog "hero" product, that's a terrific place to direct somebody. Dropping them to the home page gives them an opportunity to get lost. Smart phones are great for interaction, but not for discovery. So you need a strong call to action, valuable information and a means to convert.

**Q:** By requiring every mailpiece to have a mobile barcode on it to qualify, that means we can't test a code of offer vs. no code offer. This is a huge disadvantage, so why do all pieces need the code?

**FOTI:** The main reason is pure implementation. Complications of getting into each price cell to within a mailing statement got too complex. So we look at the total postage cost on a mailing statement and taking a 3% discount off those. We're unable to make those system changes to accommodate those mixed mailings. You could provide those on two separate mailing statements separately and one would have the discount, and the other wouldn't.

**Q:** Is it possible to have one stream for two different statements?

**FOTI:** Yes.

**KILROY:** You can serve up different pages based on the QR code. You can have one QR code, and do an A-B test to see which converts for you.

**Q:** Will we see more offers like this from the USPS in the future?

**FOTI:** We'd like to do more of it. The technology continues to develop; these water marks and other types of interactive technologies that can integrate with print are of value to us. We'll find other ways to promote this for advertisers to communicate with their customers. We have to find our place in mobile technology. We'll do similar things, but don't know what yet. We want to be aggressive and show this is a new postal service that will be interactive rather than just print.

**Q:** How costly is it to print QR codes on catalogs?

**KILROY:** Minimal. It's a simple black and white image file, which costs no more to print than anything else you put on your page. The code generation itself is free. There are plenty of other print publications that are leveraging this today. You see it in US Airways' in-flight magazine and in a number of traditional print publications, such as Cosmopolitan, GQ and Esquire. It's a natural extension of the printed page.

**Q:** Will there be multiple QR codes within a mailpiece? One for each product?

**KILROY:** Yes. There's no reason for it to be a single QR code. Just like each

catalog page provides a unique look at your selection of products, your QR code can do the same thing. Think of the QR code as an easy way to grab customers by the hand and have them interact immediately with you. It's different than today's direct mail. There's no limit to the number of places and things you can talk about. Mobile phones are with 80% of the population, 17 hours a day. This represents a powerful opportunity to extend your brand to a completely new realm.

Best,

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**About the American Catalog Mailers Association:**

*ACMA is a Washington-based not-for-profit organization specifically created to advocate for the unique collective interests of catalog mailers in regulatory, public and administrative matters where the shared impact transcends individual company interests. ACMA participates in rulemaking and other proceedings of significance where a single collective voice increases influence and effectiveness. Membership is open to any party with significant interests in the catalog industry. More information can be found at [www.catalogmailers.org](http://www.catalogmailers.org).*

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