THE NEED FOR A NEW QR CODE WORLD – OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT…

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The Background - The Feelings

The background to this one is that I was really amazed by the technology and functionality of QR codes. QR codes brought the convenience of UPC retail bar codes to the average person without the crazy costs associated. So, even from a business perspective you could have your own scanning system if you wanted.

On a personal level, it was mind blowing that I could have a business card with a QR code on it that would 'hide' data within visually and then the smart phone or web cam could see the code, unpack the data and leave it with you in a digital format - with no typing needed and no errors (unless the creator goofed). This allowed me to turn a business card into an immediately usable tool, instead of what would happen before where the paper card would get buried or lost before I got to use it, plus it would force me to type more keystrokes than I wanted. I mean.. It could even do a .vcf format something which could be loaded direct into your contact books, from what I recall (would need to review this one but 99% sure I did that…)

Further to the personal benefits, let's say you are at a social gathering. Someone approaches you and wishes to get your business card, or, some form of contact informaton that might normally be on a business card. But, you don't really want to share certain parts, or any parts with said person. These days normally you would fumble and figure it out on the fly. What if the person says 'text me'? Typically I say "I don't text" and then I have to have a long discussion about why I don't text and how to reach me, and here's my email, and here's my number, but don't call me, because I don't like phone calls, blah blah blah… It would be nice to have a standardized way of transmitting data - line of sight - no internet - no wifi - no bluetooth. Just transmit basic data. No worrying about whether they are on apple, or android or Ubuntu Touch (wait, that's no problem!) or whatever. No worrying about whether they have a cell phone or a cell phone plan, etc. It's also more inclusive that way.

I can hear the voices now:

- "But you can email all that!" - No! I want faster. No typing. No thinking.
- "But you can text all that!" - No! I said I don't text. Don't ask me to text you.
- "But you can 'bump' with Android" - I don't bump. I don't Android.
- "This is making something new that we don't need!" - Ok… maybe… And that's the point of this blog. Let's figure that out…

Why QR has failed thus far (In my opinion)

After all these thoughts above, I got to thinking about the limitations of QR. You can read some of my feelings in this bug report I filed at UBports for the Camera app. Of course, I completely understand the security need here and I can't argue it. But this has always been the issue. For QR codes to flourish, the scanner must be one button away.

And, even if you had one button there is still the annoyance of having to focus the camera. I thought about creating a tiny keychain which had one button and a camera. You would point at the QR and push/hold the 'shutter' button. It would focus, scan the QR code and beep when it was logged. Later you could sync that data with whatever device you want, somehow securely.

And that's when I started thinking that it would be cool to have an 'audio QR code'. So I searched that and found Chirp. They basically have figured it out with proprietary software - not typically a good solution if you want awesome security and privacy… But, their stuff apparently works. It sends hypersonic sounds and data.

In my opinion, this direction could work, and here are the first pros/cons:

Pros

- No focusing of cameras (faster scan?)
- No camera at all (cheaper hardware?)
- Audio? Maybe not as radioactive as radio??? (just throwing it out there for the healthy people?)
- Other cool pros?

Cons

- Apparently dogs don't like hypersonic?
- Would these things have to transmit all the time or could the 'chirp' be triggered with some kind of 'hey! any birds out there who want to chirp me anything?"
- Security? Could anyone chirp anything? I haven't really looked deeply at that part yet as you can see.

Some suggestions to the conversation were:

1. A watch (with a cam - full Dick Tracey style)
   Sure, except I would never wear a watch, and I'm not a Dick…Tracey…
2. Near Field Communication (NFC) which is explained well in this old 2014 vid

Then, whatever the solution is, would be able to securely/safely transmit the stored data into the device of your choice for reviewing, handling.

Final thoughts

I feel like I don't want to add to the smartphone in my pocket, but, it seems like there is no other way. Security people say you can't really have a one-button something without compromising security of smartphone. SO…

That's what I've got to say.

I hope some kind of cheap and useful solution lands here…

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