

## ICT Business Cards – a QR and vCard journey

Having run out of my existing stock of business cards, having a new Partnership brand to promote and an international digital conference coming up it was time to order some new business cards.

One side would be my NEICT details, the other my SOCITM NE credentials.

Oh, and wouldn't it be very 'of the moment' if the card also carried a QR code so that folks could zap it with their phone and have all my details jump straight into their contacts?

If only it were that simple.

Firstly, for the purposes of this exercise there are two types of QR code – one that embeds all the data, so you don't need a connection to get the contact details, and another that contains a URL where the user downloads the contact details.

There are many QR code resources and sites where you can create your QR code on the web - I won't bore you with details – see [http://www.qrstuff.com/qr\\_codes.html](http://www.qrstuff.com/qr_codes.html).

These are my contact details embedded in a QR code



The image is detailed and cannot be scaled to fit on a business card.



There is also a problem that my phone (Galaxy sII Gingerbread) didn't parse the data correctly so although it's all there, all that appeared in my contacts was my name and email address.

This QR code carries a URL that takes you to my contact details.



This is much more appropriate (and is readable) at business card scale



Okay, so a QR code containing a URL it is.

I created the necessary vCard files in Outlook and had them uploaded on the neict.org website.

Sorted.

Not quite.

It turns out that the QR code is fine, but the 'viewer' / 'browser' I was using displays the contact details in raw XML form. Try it on your phone.



The site I used to generate it had an option to create linked-to vCards as QR codes. These take the viewer to my contact details and give the option to download (or have them emailed if the user is an iPhone user – more on iPhones later).

The snag is they come with a banner. That could be used for advertising that might be incompatible with my 'brand'.

But it's the only way I managed to get it working properly. I decided to bite the bullet. Here are the proof business card sides



Hopefully they'll go down well at 'Thinking Digital' next week. I may even get some returned once they've been zapped. And hopefully the website hosting the contact data won't serve out any inappropriate content...

iPhones. Yes. Apparently they don't like vCard files.

QR codes, business cards and vCard files....perhaps not that straightforward after all. But an interesting learning experience.

