

QR codes build communities

# A website in your shoe

QR codes can be seen on billboards, in toilets, even on gravestones. But until now they've never been seen in safety shoes. That is about to change. After all, QR codes can guide you to websites. And websites can provide useful information about safety and the environment.

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# Employees can consult the website and see exactly how old a shoe is and when it's time for a replacement

**T**he first beep is emitted as the safety shoe leaves the factory. Because that's when the QR code in the shoe is first scanned. The exact time of this first scan is recorded on a unique website. When the code is later scanned by the end user with his mobile phone, he will be sent a message once the shoe is a year old. That means it's time for some maintenance. The last beep is sounded a few years later, when the shoe is handed over to the waste plant. The QR code is scanned again at this point. And, by doing so, waste processors can see on the website exactly which materials have been used in the shoe concerned. This information is displayed in a passport of materials. This allows the waste processors to optimise the shoe's recycling.

## Community

QR codes. Unlike sensors they are not able to store active information (see insert)

## Sensors and QR codes

In recent years, company clothing has been embellished with all kinds of high-tech accessories. Sensors, for example. These can measure all kinds of things: ranging from the temperature to the level of G-force and from someone's posture at work to the average number of steps taken each day. These sensors even allow such details to be revealed 'real time'. This means that adjustments can be made. QR codes do none of this: they can simply guide the user to a website and 'enrich' the data. However, they do offer a major benefit: they cost almost nothing. In contrast, a sensor soon amounts to ten euros per piece.

They are simply unique codes that lead to a website. However, QR codes also help to create a certain community. The employee scanning the code can log in there and, for example, participate in a contest. Or review the products. Indeed, this is an area where shoe manufacturers lack direct influence. They often work with a broker. These deliver the shoes to the various companies using them – in other words: to the buyers. In turn, they pass the shoes on to the employees. An attractive contest or inspiring community stimulates the employee to effectively scan the code. Once this is done he will be asked to register, for example for the contest. This then gives the supplier the opportunity to provide tailored safety tips.

## Safety

Such tips will not be limited to the shoe's life span. The employee can indeed see on the site how old the shoe is and when it needs to be replaced. However, there are also other points to watch out for. Is the shoe still safe? Are there any holes in the shank? Is all the stitching still tight? It is really important for employees to check this on a regular basis.

It doesn't end there. Employees can also check whether they are wearing the right model. Safety shoes are available in four key categories: S1, S1P, S2 and S3. For example, shoes in category S3 have anti-slip, a steel toecap, toe protection and they remain waterproof for at least one hour. S2 shoes do not feature anti-slip. It is therefore important to choose the right category – that is something that can't always be left to a buyer. Employees can check the category themselves by scanning the code. They then find a series of checks on the website.

## Environment

The QR code also benefits the environment. Years ago, people working in waste incineration confirmed that they regularly found steel toecaps when removing ashes from their ovens. Safety shoes almost always tend to be thrown into the incinerator as a whole. Hardly anything is sent for recycling. Now recyclable safety shoes are available. These can also be fitted with a QR code. There are special containers available for employees using safety shoes. These can be used to return all worn-out shoes. Anything that can be recycled – laces, caps, soles – is already a great bonus.

## Wear and tear

Shoes wear out, but that is not the case for QR codes. Can they still be read after a few years? They certainly can! After all, the codes are not printed, they are embroidered. With indestructible thread, black on grey. And, for the environment's sake, the thread is also made of recycled material. «

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