

# Why Barcodes Have Stood the Test of Time

For nearly half a century, barcodes have been a staple of our everyday lives. First introduced in 1974, the humble barcode revolutionised retail and soon spread all over the world – and now, 10 billion barcodes, still essentially the same now as they were nearly 50 years ago, are scanned every day.

So ubiquitous is the barcode that it might be difficult to imagine life without it. But that's just what some experts are suggesting might happen in the next few years, predicting that the 2D code – such as the QR code – which can contain 100 times as much information – will come to displace it.

But before we consign the barcode to the pages of history, it's worth reflecting on the reasons underlying its immense longevity and success in every corner of the planet. Here's why barcodes have so successfully stood the test of time.

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## They Save Time and Effort

The introduction of the barcode radically transformed supply chains and inventory management by greatly simplifying the collection and management of data. This, in turn, greatly enhanced overall efficiency by making it much simpler for companies to manage vast numbers of individual products.

With the arrival of the barcode, businesses no longer needed to enter inventory and shipping data manually for every single item. As

a result, a task that previously took much time and effort was automated in one stroke, enabling companies to scan items much quicker.

[Scanning barcodes](#) is much quicker than manual data entry, which can be laborious by comparison, this helps boost workforce productivity by [freeing up employees](#) to perform other tasks.

## **They're Scalable and Support Growth**

As well as being highly efficient, barcodes are also easily scalable. Both small businesses and huge global corporations can use them because they can be adapted to suit the needs of different industries and companies of varying sizes.

Because they're so flexible and convenient to use, barcodes also help to [support individual businesses as they expand](#). The system will continue to work the same no matter how many items a company might have on its roster, making it easier to add new product lines.

Barcodes can be used on practically any kind of product across a huge variety of industries, so they're incredibly versatile as well. This has made them an invaluable tool for millions of businesses worldwide.

## **They're Affordable**

Another crucial advantage of barcodes is that they're inexpensive to implement. The [scanning technology](#) required is easily accessible for any business regardless of its size, and printing out barcodes is also very cost-effective and easy to do.

This is one of the main reasons why barcodes have become so widely used worldwide. Even the smallest businesses can adopt barcoding solutions – and they have done precisely that, in enormous numbers.

## **They Help to Reduce Errors**

As noted, barcodes simplify inventory management by automating data entry, saving time and effort. Another key advantage is that they eliminate human error from this process, which can make a huge difference.

Manual inventory is vulnerable to human error; it's only too easy to enter the wrong figure or make a typographical error. But minor errors like these can soon add up to a significant problem. By [automating this process](#), barcodes eliminate much human error and enhance accuracy.

Reading barcodes with the help of a scanner is quick and easy, and there's only a minimal chance of getting it wrong. This ensures a high accuracy rate and has served to eliminate a lot of data entry mistakes which were previously commonplace.

## **They Help Businesses Make Data-driven Decisions**

Data collection is playing an increasingly important role in how businesses operate. This is because companies are keen to base their key decisions on hard data, providing them with concrete insights and also doing away with the guesswork that often previously hindered decision-making.

Barcodes provide detailed information about sales, inventory and supply chains, giving businesses a clear and comprehensive overview of how they function. This helps them to make better decisions and, crucially, obtain a much deeper understanding of customer behaviour and preferences too.

For more than 25 years, Cobalt has been raising the bar for barcoding solutions as well as print and apply products. We work in a modular and scalable way to give our customers the flexibility they need. [Get in touch with the team at Cobalt](#) to find out how we can help deliver barcode solutions.