



APPWT WEB & AI SOLUTIONS

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The AppWT QR Restaurant Quickstart

Restaurant QR Codes

Written by Anthony “Tony” Paris

AppWT Web & AI Solutions (AppWT LLC, a family company)



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A NOTE ON SPELLING

This manual is read in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. Where a word is spelled differently in different countries, both spellings appear the first time the word is used, like color/colour. After that, one spelling is used so the page stays easy to read.

HOW TO USE THE TECHNICAL NOTES

Smaller italic notes marked *For your tech person* hold the deeper detail: exact settings, file names and commands. You can skip every one of them and the manual still makes complete sense. Hand them to whoever looks after your website.

IMPORTANT

This manual describes security practices that AppWT uses and recommends. It is written as general guidance for business owners. It is not legal advice, and it is not a guarantee that any system cannot be attacked. Security reduces risk. No honest provider will promise to remove risk entirely.

Every incident described in this manual comes from work AppWT actually performed. Client identities are deliberately withheld, because a client's security incident is not ours to publish. Where the business involved is AppWT itself, we name ourselves.

A Note From Tony

The question that started this book was asked across a table with the plates still on it. A restaurant owner wanted to know why the codes he had printed were not working. I asked him to scan one. He held his phone over the card on table six, waited, moved it closer, tilted it, and eventually put the phone down and said the room was too dark. The room was not too dark. The code was too small for the address behind it, and nobody had ever printed a proof.

I have been building and fixing websites for business owners since 1997, and restaurants have been part of that work for most of it. The same pattern keeps repeating. Somebody arrives with a marketing question, and underneath it sits a physical problem or a page problem that no amount of marketing will move. A better card will not rescue a menu page that takes eight seconds to load on a Friday night.

Restaurants earned their own manual because of one advantage nobody else has. A guest sits in your room for the length of a meal, with a phone already on the table, feeling good about food you cooked. A shop gets four minutes in an aisle. You get an hour. Every placement in this book is built to use that hour, and every one of them costs less than a week of advertising.

Here is what I promise. Every chapter ends with something you can do, and most of them end with something printed or written down. A destination map for all seven placements. A proof protocol you run before any print run. A monthly sheet with two numbers per code. Worked examples use figures that belong to the operator in the example, taken from their own dashboard and their own booking system, and I say so every time.

Here is what I will not promise. I cannot tell you how many guests will scan, because that depends on your room, your guests and your town, none of which I have seen from Michigan. You will not find an industry conversion rate anywhere in these pages. Where a number would be useful and I cannot stand behind it, I have written the mechanism instead, and chapter twelve shows you how to measure the real figure in your own building inside a month.

Two boundaries run through the book and I want both stated before you start. Review platforms publish their own rules about incentives and about who you may ask, and those rules change. Marketing messages by text and email are governed by law that differs by country and by state, carries real penalties, and has moved more than once in recent years. Chapters six, seven and eleven all stop at the same place and send you to the platform's own current help pages, or to somebody qualified in your jurisdiction. This manual is business information and it is not legal advice.

Work Part One first, in order, before you print anything at all. Four chapters, no purchases, and one physical proof at the end of it. Owners want to skip straight to the placements, because the placements are the interesting part. Skip Part One and you will buy a thousand cards that read perfectly on your phone in the office and fail on table nine at eight in the evening. I have watched that happen more than once, and it is expensive in a way that is completely avoidable.

This edition describes the market as it stands in 2026. Some of what was reasonable advice five years ago is not reasonable now. A PDF menu was a defensible shortcut when every restaurant was improvising, and it is not defensible today, because it cannot be read aloud, cannot be enlarged and cannot be searched. Where something is still moving, such as what a third-party delivery platform permits you to place in a bag, I have told you to read your own agreement rather than pretending there is one answer.

Some of what you find here will not be comfortable. Your best-scanning code may turn out to be the one earning the least. A favorite/favourite design may have to be reprinted in matte. A placement you were proud of may need retiring after three months. Those are ordinary outcomes and the book treats them as such. What matters is that you decided with two numbers in front of you rather than with a feeling.

One last thing, and it is the point of the whole manual. The code is not the marketing. The room is. A printed square is only the shortest path between a piece of paper you control and a page you control, at a moment you chose. Get the moment right, keep the page fast, count what each one earned, and the rest is arithmetic you can organize/organise on one sheet.

Anthony “Tony” Paris

Founder, AppWT Web & AI Solutions · Livonia, Michigan

How to Use This Manual

This manual is built to be worked with a pen and a phone beside you. Keep one folder, on paper or on screen, and put every output in it as you go. Thirteen chapters produce a destination map, a proof, a rollout plan and a monthly sheet, and the last chapter turns them into one project with dates on it.

The parts

Part One is everything that happens before you print. Chapter 1 explains why the dining room beats every other channel and names the seven moments you already own. Chapter 2 opens up the code itself, so you understand why a long web address turns into a card nobody can scan. Chapter 3 settles the static or dynamic question and shows you which link in the chain you must own. Chapter 4 turns all of it into ink, with a proof protocol you run before every run. Nothing gets ordered until the end of Part One, and that is on purpose.

Part Two walks the seven placements in the order a guest meets them. The table tent and the digital menu. The check presenter, front and back, carrying the review ask and the catering ask. The window, the door and the board on the street, aimed at people who have not come in yet. The takeaway bag, which is the only code that goes home. The manager card, which is the only one a person hands over on purpose. Each chapter names the guest, the state they are in, the one job and the destination.

Part Three is the far end of the bridge and the arithmetic. Chapter 10 sets the three-second test your landing page has to pass on a crowded venue network. Chapter 11 covers what to ask for at each placement, in what words, and the consent practice that keeps a list worth having. Chapter 12 separates attention from revenue and gives you the monthly sheet. Chapter 13 assembles the whole thing into a ninety-day plan with a budget shape and a routine that keeps it alive.

The boxes, and what each one means

DO THIS TODAY

A gold box is one action you can finish now. If you only ever act on the gold boxes, you will still be far safer than when you started.

FROM OUR FILES

A dark box is a real incident from AppWT work. Nothing in these boxes is invented. Where a detail was never verified, we say so rather than fill the gap.

FOR YOUR TECH PERSON

A smaller italic note like this one carries the professional detail: exact file names, headers, settings and commands. Skip every one and the manual still reads completely. Forward them to your web person.

The tables, the sheets and the three code blocks

There is almost no code in this book. The three code blocks are a naming pattern for your tracking labels, the running order of a landing page, and the column headings for the monthly sheet. Type them into any spreadsheet or hand them to whoever maintains your site. The tables are meant to be used rather than admired, particularly the destination map in chapter 9 and the size and distance table in chapter 4. Copy both onto one page and keep them with your printer quotes.

What this book does not promise

No scan rate is promised and no conversion figure is promised, because both depend on a room I have not seen. Nothing here is legal advice. Review platform policies and the rules covering marketing messages by text and email differ by place, change over time, and are checked against the platform's own current pages or with somebody qualified where you trade. Payment gateway setup, general email marketing method and map profile work each belong to separate AppWT titles, and this one points at them rather than repeating them badly.

If you only have one afternoon

Do four things, in this order. Scan every code already in your building and confirm each one still opens the page you expect. Open your menu on a phone using the venue wifi at your busiest hour and time how long it takes to become readable. Print one proof of your table tent at final size on final stock, and scan it in the dimmest booth you have with the oldest phone you can borrow. Then point your review code straight at the review writing box rather than at your homepage. All four are free or nearly free, and between them they close the leaks that cost restaurants the most.

Where to keep the outputs

Keep one folder and treat it as part of the business. The destination map, the signed physical proofs, the printer quotes, the staff briefing notes and the monthly sheets all live in it, each with a date on the front. Put the weekly code scan, the monthly export and the yearly outdoor replacement on the same calendar your managers already use, because a habit that lives only in somebody's head leaves the building when they do. Keep the old monthly sheets too, since last year's numbers are what tell you whether this year's decision worked.

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PART ONE

Before You Print Anything

A code that nobody can scan is a design problem, and a code pointing at a dead page is a decision problem. These four chapters cover the room you are working in, the mechanism inside the pattern, the static or dynamic choice that decides whether a menu change costs a click or a print run, and the printing rules that keep a card readable in a dim booth.



Why the Dining Room Beats Every Other Channel

Chapter 1. The seven moments you already own, and the short window that makes them work

A restaurant holds a guest in a chair for the length of a meal, with a phone already on the table.

This chapter explains why an ask made inside the room outperforms the same ask made anywhere else, names the seven moments a restaurant owns, and sets the honest limits of what a printed code can do.

The plates are cleared. The guest is still in the chair, leaning back, talking about the dessert nobody needed. Their phone sits face up on the table, because it has been there since they arrived. The meal went well. Nobody is in a hurry. For the next few minutes that person will do almost any small thing you ask. In an hour they will not. Restaurant marketing lives inside those few minutes, and most restaurants spend their money everywhere else.

This is a constraint no other local business shares, and it works for you rather than against you. A plumber gets a doorway conversation. A shop gets the length of an aisle. You get a whole meal, in a room you control, with a phone already within reach. That is the entire argument for putting codes in your dining room before you buy any more advertising.

Three Things You Own That an Advertisement Never Will

- Attention already given. The guest chose to come, sat down, and is not scrolling past you.
- Trust already earned. The food did the persuading before you asked for anything at all.
- A phone already in hand. There is no app to install, no account to open and no password to remember.

Each one is small on its own. Together they explain why a card on a table gets used while the same offer in a social post gets ignored. You did not buy that attention. You earned it with the meal, and a printed code simply gives it somewhere to go.

The Gratitude Window

There is a short stretch between the final bite and the front door when a guest feels good and is not yet busy again. Call it the gratitude window. Inside it, a request for a review, a signup or a booking lands as a small favor/favour rather than as an interruption. Once the door closes, the same request has to compete with traffic, children, work and everything else waiting in that person's evening.

Do not take a size for that window from any book, including this one. Rooms differ. A lunch counter has a window measured in seconds. A tasting menu has one measured in long minutes. Chapter twelve shows you how to measure your own using the scan times your own codes report. What matters now is only that the window exists and that it is short.

The same ask sent by email the next day has to do far more work. The guest no longer remembers the server's name or the dish that made the night. Nothing is wrong with email, and chapter eleven covers it properly. It simply starts from further back.

MEASURE YOUR OWN ROOM, NOT SOMEBODY ELSE'S

Any multiplier you read about in-room asks was measured in a room that is not yours, with a menu that is not yours, at a price point you do not charge. Treat it as a reason to run the test, never as a result you can borrow. Two weeks and one changed variable will tell you more about your restaurant than any published figure ever will.

Seven Moments a Restaurant Already Owns

A restaurant does not have one moment. It has several, and each one holds a different guest in a different state of mind. A guest just seated wants the menu. A guest paying is ready to be asked for a review. A guest standing outside in the cold wants your hours and nothing else. The seven placements in Part Two exist because these moments are not interchangeable, and a code that ignores the difference will underperform in every one of them.

MOMENT	WHAT THE GUEST IS DOING	WHAT THEY WILL DO RIGHT NOW	WHAT THEY WILL NOT DO
Just seated	Settling in, hungry, deciding	Open a menu and read it properly	Fill in a form or write a review
Mid-meal	Eating, talking, relaxed	Join the wifi, follow a social account	Leave the table to look at anything

MOMENT	WHAT THE GUEST IS DOING	WHAT THEY WILL DO RIGHT NOW	WHAT THEY WILL NOT DO
Paying	Reaching for a card, feeling good	Leave a review, take one photograph	Read a long page or compare options
Leaving	Standing, coat on, already moving	Take a small card away with them	Scan anything that needs more than a second
Outside and undecided	Standing in the street, often in weather	Check hours, prices and a booking form	Read your story or your photograph gallery
At home with a takeaway bag	Eating, comfortable, no rush at all	Reorder, sign up, read the full menu	Drive back to you again tonight
Celebrating something	Marking a birthday or a deal closed	Ask about a private room or a large party	Book and pay for it at the table

TWO ASKS, ONE WEEK APART

A forty-seat cafe wanted to know whether the room really did the work, so the owner ran a comparison instead of an argument. Week one carried a review code on the check presenter, the folder the bill arrives in, and nothing else. Week two carried no card, and every guest who left an address received a polite follow-up email the next morning. He counted reviews received in the seven days after each week. The card week produced eleven. The email week produced two. Those are his counts in his room, and they are not a rule about restaurants anywhere else. What transfers is the shape of the test. He changed one thing, counted one outcome, and gave each version the same length of time and roughly the same number of guests. Any owner can run that comparison inside two weeks, and the answer will be about their own room rather than about somebody else's.

What a Code Can Do, and What It Cannot

A QR code is not marketing. It is a bridge. On one side sits a piece of paper you control, placed where you chose, reaching a guest in a state you can predict. On the other side sits a page you also control. The code is the shortest path between the two, and it costs almost nothing to print. Everything that makes it work or fail happens at one of those two ends, never in the middle.

- It cannot make a guest want something they did not already want.
- It cannot rescue a slow page. A code opening a page that takes eight seconds has failed, and the guest blames you rather than the code.
- It cannot replace a printed menu for every guest. Some have no data, some have no charge left, and some simply prefer paper.
- It cannot fix a bad meal. Nobody scans a review code after a night that went wrong, and you would not want them to.

Keep printed menus available and keep them clean. A digital menu is an addition, not a replacement, and a guest who asks for paper should get it without a pause or a sigh. The same applies to anyone who cannot read a small screen comfortably. Chapter ten covers the accessibility rules that keep your page usable, and a stack of paper copies at the host stand covers the rest.

FOR YOUR TECH PERSON

Before printing anything, list every web address a guest could be sent to and confirm each one returns a working page over a secure connection. A code pointing at an address that redirects twice loads slower on a phone than one pointing straight at the page.

A code is a bridge. The room decides who walks across it.

FOR YOUR TECH PERSON

Ask your booking system or till for a report of table turn times by hour. That report, set beside the scan timestamps covered in chapter twelve, is how you measure your own gratitude window instead of guessing at it.

Everything else in this manual follows from the room. Part One covers the code itself and how to print one that reads in a dim booth. Part Two walks the seven placements in order. Part Three covers the page, the ask and the numbers that show which placements earned their space. Start where you are standing, which is the dining room.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- A restaurant holds a guest in a chair with a phone already on the table, which no advertisement can buy.
- The gratitude window between the final bite and the front door is short, and every in-room ask should sit inside it.
- Each of the seven moments holds a guest in a different state, so one destination cannot serve them all.
- Test any claim about in-room asks in your own room by changing one thing and counting one outcome.
- A code is a bridge between paper you control and a page you control, and it fixes nothing at either end.
- Keep printed menus available, because a digital menu is an addition rather than a replacement.



Inside the Square: How a QR Code Actually Works

Chapter 2. The mechanism behind every printing decision you are about to make

A QR code is a map the camera reads, not a picture a designer draws. This chapter explains modules, versions and error correction in plain words, then shows why a long address makes a code harder to read at the same printed size.

A code looked perfect on the designer's monitor. It went on two hundred table tents. On the third night a server reported that the code on table nine would not read, then table four, then most of the room after the lights came down. Nothing had changed on the cards. Nothing was wrong with the printing. The code was simply too dense for the size it was printed at, and the room was too dim to make up the difference.

You do not need to become an engineer to avoid that. You do need to know what the camera is looking for, because every printing decision in chapter four depends on it.

The Pattern Is a Map, Not a Picture

A QR code is a grid of small squares. Each square is called a module, and each one is either dark or light. The whole grid is read as data, but several parts of it are not data at all. They are landmarks that tell the camera where it is.

- The three large squares in the corners are finder patterns. They tell the camera it is looking at a code and which way up the code sits.
- The smaller squares inside the pattern are alignment patterns. They let the camera correct for a card lying at an angle or curving away.
- The dotted lines running between the corner squares are timing patterns. They set the grid spacing so the camera knows how wide one module is.
- Everything else is your data plus the recovery information that repairs it.

This is why a code still reads upside down and at an angle. The landmarks do that work. It is also why covering a corner square kills a code outright while a splash of sauce across the middle often does not.

Versions: Why More Text Means Smaller Squares

The QR standard defines forty sizes, called versions. Version one is a grid twenty-one modules wide. Each version up adds four modules to each side, so version two is twenty-five wide, version three is twenty-nine, and the largest is one hundred and seventy-seven modules across. More data needs a higher version.

Here is the part that matters on a table tent. The printed code stays the same physical width because the card stays the same size. A higher version packs more modules into that same width, so each individual module gets smaller. Smaller modules need a better camera, better light and a steadier hand. That is the whole reason a long address turns into a code nobody can read.

FOR YOUR TECH PERSON

Keep the address inside the code as short as you can. A tracking address of about twenty to thirty characters usually stays in the low versions with large, forgiving modules. A long address carrying several parameters can push the same code several versions higher, and the modules shrink accordingly. Generate both and compare the printed grids side by side before you commit.