

Social Media Marketing & The Church



A concise guide to social media planning and strategic marketing application for the church.

Pastor Lee Wells

The subject of social media and marketing is a vast discussion. Many people are seeing the need for an active internet presence but simply do not know where to begin. The purpose of this resource is to simplify the use of social media in the church and to help a church author its own systematic plan.

Is Social Media Relevant?

One of the most cost-effective ways to promote and market a church is online. By using free services like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, you eliminate the costly elements of printed material and traditional advertising media. In today's society social media can be more effective than traditional marketing avenues. It seems that people are more willing to receive an invitation on Facebook than in their post office mailbox. Making information comfortable is the first key to winning people to your message.

This concept centers around a very familiar listing of the five W's:

Who - What - When - Where - Why?

Once these particulars are discovered and mapped out, the execution of a social media plan becomes simple. After your plan is developed, an individual or team can be equipped to execute the agreed-upon online action plan.

This resource is designed to help churches remove the stress and worry surrounding a social media presence by: a) creating a clear decision matrix, and b) providing a management system that simplifies new online marketing concepts. This will help make church marketing and outreach efforts more fruitful over time.

overview

When developing a social media plan, there are five simple directives to keep in mind.

Who - What - When - Where - Why?

It may sound simple enough, but there needs to be some thought put into the information that is being sent out by the church. Many times bad or poorly executed information can be worse than no information at all.

For a church to implement this marketing strategy effectively, a coordinator of social media promotions may be necessary.

This should be a person who is either already online in a personal capacity, or someone who can learn to navigate the internet quickly. He or she will be signing in and out of multiple social media accounts on a regular basis. This can be taught, but it's great to use a person who is already actively involved in these activities.

Here are the individual questions that should be thought-through for each posting:

- ▶ **Who is the intended audience?**
- ▶ **What is the intended communication?**
- ▶ **When will this information be posted?**
- ▶ **Where will this information be posted?**
- ▶ **Why is this information being posted?**

▶ who

The first thing that must be determined is the “who.”

Who is the intended audience?

Defining the intended audience will help determine several key decisions you will make later in this process.

Communication will be directed toward:

- ▶ members
- ▶ former guests
- ▶ followers of your social media channel
- ▶ new prospective guests
- ▶ community in general.

Each of these audiences requires an appropriate approach. Be sure to think about who will see this information and what their expected response might be.

For example, if a church is sending out an invitation to an upcoming service, then the approach would be open and inviting. Make sure to include information that a first-time guest may need to find the location, etc. This audience may not know the schedule, nursery situation, or the attire required for the event. Keeping the “who” in mind will help to create a more effective communication, resulting in a better success rate for the online efforts.

▶ what

Defining the “what” as it pertains to your online communication is the heart of your effort. Making the determination of what you will be sharing may take the input of several key team members.

What will be advertised to promote the ministry, program, or church in general?

Here are some items that could be promoted:

- ▶ upcoming special events
- ▶ recurring event details
- ▶ testimonies and encouragement
- ▶ devotional thoughts
- ▶ church ministries
- ▶ general church advertisement.

Ideally, a church will need to create an information flow that includes all department leaders. This may include a monthly planning meeting where the upcoming month/quarter calendar is discussed and charted.

Every church will need to find a system to gather and coordinate social media marketing information to be published.

In the “How” section of this resource it is laid out in an easy systematic method to aid your team in this process.

▶ when

There have been scientific studies conducted on the best time to post marketing information on the assortment of social media networks.

When should information be posted to social media news feeds?

A church must decide:

- ▶ how early to begin posting
- ▶ how many times the information is repeated
- ▶ what days of the week are best
- ▶ what time of day is best.

It is suggested that events should be posted at least one week in advance but in some cases earlier.

It is suggested that a minimum of three postings be made for each event. A good rule may be to post one week prior, again three days out, and then the day before the event. Repetition is key. There is no guarantee that every follower will see each post made, so each church should decide on the number of repetitions used in their plan.

Studies show that the best times of the weekday to post are 6-8AM, 11-1PM, 5-6PM, and 9-11PM. These represent times before work or school, lunch time, drive time, and bed time. These times are when people are most likely to have a moment to check in on their favorite social media.

In general, Monday through Friday are the best days to post to social media.

▶ where

By the very nature of each of the social media networks, some will be a better fit for certain posts. There are several things to consider in making this choice.

Where should my information be posted?

A church must choose the best fit from the media outlets it has:

- ▶ church website
- ▶ email blast or e-newsletter
- ▶ church Facebook page
- ▶ Twitter / Instagram
- ▶ mobile text message.

There are differing attributes for each social media service. This is what allows them all to be a viable option, working alongside each other. Facebook, for instance, is a great place for longer-worded postings, where Twitter is a limited-character platform. They both serve a valid purpose, but each should be used in a proper manner.

With each post the pros and cons of the media service should be considered. If a church wants to post a text-based invite, Instagram is probably not be the place to post it, while a picture-based message would be a great fit for Instagram.

Knowing the best platform may take some trial and error, so be sure you consider this point when creating your mobile marketing plan.

▶ why

The purpose of this step is to fine-tune the overall message being sent out. When the question of why is asked, it helps us to think about our efforts again, and make sure we are staying the course of the overall goal of marketing.

Why are we posting this information?

It is possible to work toward an end goal so diligently that we lose sight of the purpose. **The purpose is always to engage the lost and win souls.**

Determine if the post is:

- ▶ informative
- ▶ interesting
- ▶ inspiring
- ▶ intriguing.

A church should pay very close attention to the way in which social media is worded. The last thing anyone wants is for good intentions to be misrepresented. Take a moment and reevaluate the tone, the content, and the purpose for each scheduled post.

Here's a suggestion. Assume an outsider's view, and imagine if you were the recipient of this message. How would it set with you? Would you be inspired, interested, intrigued, or maybe even insulted or offended?

It is possible to become oblivious to the way a church can be perceived, and perception is reality in the world of social media and the internet.

how - creation

By using the 5 W's, a church can systematically create marketing information that is focused and beneficial to a community.

who:

what:

when:

where:

content:

assigned:

