

Leveraging Social Media For Your Church Part 1: Overview

[Images](#)



Tagline: There are currently over four billion social media users which is almost 60% of the world's population. These platforms are incredible opportunities for churches to make a kingdom impact. But unless we are inspired and educated that isn't going to happen.

Tweet 1: Our current church model is predominantly come and see. Social media is go and show. Incorporating social media into your model allows you a greater degree of missional impact.

Tweet 2: Any new venture requires more than permission. Buy-in gives you the needed support to see through rough patches along the journey. If you are looking to step up your social media game, then get buy-in first.

Tweet 3: Don't waste your time doing what another church is doing on social media. Do you. Figure out where God has uniquely positioned you in the social media landscape and make a distinct impact.

Introduction

There are currently over four billion social media users which is almost 60% of the world's population. These platforms are incredible opportunities for churches to make a kingdom

impact. But unless we are inspired and educated that isn't going to happen. In this article we will look at why it is important to leverage social media for your church. Then generally how to leverage any underused form of technology. And lastly how to specifically leverage social media. Also, if you're looking for coaching on this topic beyond this article then visit benstapley.com/coach to schedule a free consultation. I would love to help you determine the obstacles you're facing and if I'm the best person to help you overcome them.

Why You Need To Leverage Social Media For Your Church

24/7 Engagement

If you were leading a church twenty years ago you had limited options to engage your whole congregation. Services once a week. An email once a month. And a newsletter once a quarter. But for the past twenty years (yes, Facebook is turning twenty next year) church leaders have had increased engagement options because of social media. We can now send out an inclement weather warning Wednesday afternoon that applies for Wednesday night. We can ask folks for a last minute sermon illustration on Saturday that they'll hear on Sunday. We can now engage folks for 1 hour on Sunday and the other 167 during the rest of the week. Social media gives the possibility of 24/7 engagement so let's leverage it.

Empowering Young Leaders

I grew up in church. One of the phrases I heard often was "you're the future church". I never heard or felt that I was the current church until I reached adulthood. Part of this was because of excessive and unhealthy gatekeeping. But another part of this was options. The leaders overseeing me didn't have a lot of options to empower me. But we have more options now. True, you might not want to release a teenager to oversee a mission trip halfway across the world. But there is no reason they can't be the storyteller of this critical outreach initiative. An eighteen year old might not be ready to run a small group with eighteen people but they could be empowered to manage your social account with 1,800 followers.

Dialogue Not Monologue

I love listening to great messages. [My Name Is Hosea](#) by E.K. Bailey is one of my personal favorites. I also love presenting a good message. But they have limitations. A key limitation is the direction of communication. It is a one way street. Sermons are monologues but social media is a dialogue. It is a two way street with communication traffic coming and going. The dialectic mode of communication on social media allows for a give and take which is not common for our modern western brand of Christianity. But asking difficult questions and interrupting with objections - dialoguing - would have been a normal way of wrestling through the faith in a first century Jewish context. Let's get back to our roots with additional means of dialogue via social media.

Missionally Minded

Our current church model is predominantly come and see. And this model has a place. The psalmist tells the reader to taste and see that the LORD is good. The idea that you will pursue God and find Him in that pursuit. But we are lacking in our missional mindedness. A mindset

that doesn't say come to me, but instead says I will go to you. This model also has its place. Jesus tells His disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." in John 20:21. The average social media [user](#) spends two and a half hours a day on social media. Social media is an incredible platform to demonstrate a missional mindset. It allows us to go where people are already at. Spend some time with them today.

Better Late Than Never

You might be a volunteer reading this article frustrated by your church's inactivity on social media. Or you might be a leader embarrassed by the minimal effort you have put into leveraging these platforms. Regardless of what has or is holding you back, my encouragement is to press on. It is better to start leveraging these platforms now instead of never. Remember that one of the most successful tactics of the enemy is discouragement through [lies](#). Don't believe the lies that you are a failure in this area. Believe the truth. The truth that God wants to equip you and bless your efforts on social media for His glory.

How To Leverage Social Media For Your Church Generally

Get Buy-In

As with any new venture in any organization, it is vital to get buy-in from your supervisor. And notice that I don't say permission. If you are going to be successful on social media you need more than allowance. You need support. You need affirmation. You need buy-in from your leader. Do not move forward until you get this buy in. If you do, you will see short term success with long term consequences. The success of posting more or launching a new platform. But the consequence of being under-resourced or under-valued. That trade off is never worth it. So get buy-in first.

Develop A Volunteer Team

A team of good volunteer social media managers is better than a great individual staff member. A team prevents one person from getting burned out and allows individuals to use their gifts. It can be tempting to put the oversight or advancement of your social channels on a staff member for a quick improvement. But I suggest you slow down by developing a team first. Remember the old saying - if you want to go fast go alone but if you want to go far go together. Social media isn't going away anytime soon. So go together by developing a team that will take you far for years to come.

Acknowledge Pros & Cons

Neil Postman the author and media theorist warned us of taking a cycloptic view of any new technology. The view from a solely positive perspective. Neil encourages a dual vantage point taking in the good and bad. We too need to look at the same coin from both sides seeing the pros and cons of social media. The majority of this article is dedicated to the pros. But you need to be versed in the cons as well to help you avoid pitfalls along the journey. Cons such as addiction, comparison and social isolation. I encourage you to do a deep dive on the subject. [Here](#) is a good scientific article from the National Center For Biotechnology Information as a starting point.

Avoid The Comparison Trap

When I started in ministry twenty years ago I compared our church to the one halfway across the city that was twice the size. With social media, it can be tempting to compare yourself with another church halfway across the country that is twenty times your size. Don't do it. It will demoralize you. It will also get you off mission. If you spend too much time watching how other churches do social media, you will start copying their strategy and mission. Stealing someone else's strategy is fine as long as it helps you accomplish your mission. Not theirs. God has a unique calling placed on you. Figure it out and pursue it.

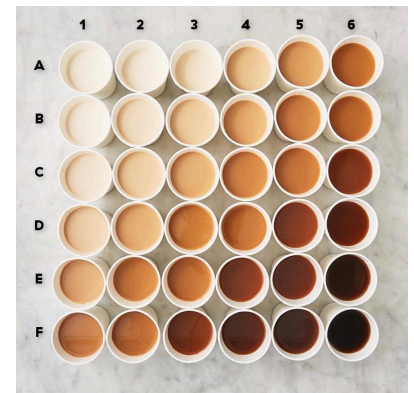
Do You

The first church I started working at was founded in 1870. The only female state prison opened up across the street from us in 1913. But we didn't start a ministry there until 2013. It took a while but we figured out how God had uniquely positioned us in time and space to make an impact no one else could. Social media is a big place. Don't waste your time doing what another church is doing. Do you. Figure out where God has uniquely positioned you in the social media landscape and make a distinct impact.

How To Leverage Social Media For Your Church Specifically

It Has To Reflect Its Purpose

I like when I hear churches change the last word. When they talk about social ministry instead of social media. Because it helps us remember the purpose. As Simon Sinek puts it, [Start With Why](#). Why are we doing this? To make an eternal impact. So even though it can be tempting to regularly post content that gets high engagement with low purpose (example - how do you take your coffee) I encourage you not to. Content like how do you take your coffee or what is your favorite Christmas movie. Too much of this content allows you to lose focus and forget your purpose.

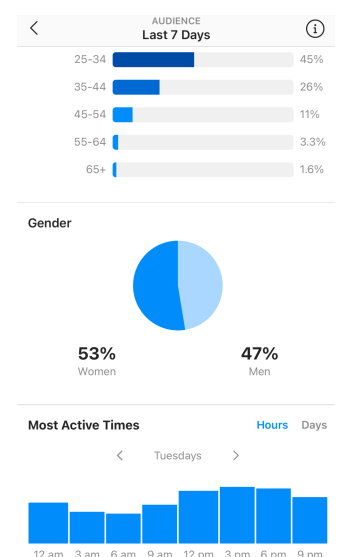


It Has To Reflect Its Name

A lot of social media content is the latter but not the former. It is media. But it is not social. We post content. People respond. And then crickets. We ghost them and just move on to posting more content. And I know why. Being social takes time. It takes effort. It is much easier to post content then engage with content. But I firmly believe that you will have a larger kingdom impact if you reverse that trend. If you decrease your content but increase your engagement. And when I say engagement I am talking about purposeful and meaningful human interaction. Not just a 🙏 response.

Quarterly Audit

Most social platforms have some type of analytics. A way for you to get a bird's eye perspective of what is working and what isn't. So take time to do a



quarterly audit to confirm what is killer content your people want and what is fluff they avoid. Then respond to that information by making data driven decisions. Reduce what isn't working and double down on what is. What is working on social media quickly changes over time. These quarterly audits help you change with the times. They also ensure you are leveraging social media for the greatest impact.

CONCLUSION

If you want additional help leveraging social media for your church then visit benstapley.com/coach to schedule a free consultation. I would love to help you win in this area. We will cover best practices for photos in part [two](#) of this series...