

# Using Social Media Effectively

By Mark Forrester

**Q:** Is Social Media important to a church's communication strategy? If so, how do we make sure it is effective?

**A:** Social media holds enormous potential for churches. Beyond the low-cost marketing potential, social media allows you to meet people where they are. Recent studies show more than 85 million Americans watch TV while simultaneously interacting online. An effective social media strategy expands the reach of your weekend services to a connection that lasts throughout the week. As your congregation interacts with your content, sharing it in their networks, your reach and evangelism opportunity grows exponentially. Don't think of it as a burden, but embrace it as an opportunity!

In 2012, the average social media budget for corporations was 7.4% of the total annual marketing budget. This is projected to rise to 19% in the next 5 years. In its most basic form, social media is about connecting; therefore, social media also allows many "free" opportunities to connect people in ways never imagined before.

Social media also offers some incredible marketing opportunities for local churches. For an extremely low budget, marketers can target specific ZIP codes, specific interests, age ranges, and more. Facebook makes it especially easy to see the specific results of your targeted marketing campaigns through their extensive analytics.

Create a communication strategy that best utilizes the different social media platforms.

Avoid creating just a "Facebook strategy" or "Twitter strategy." To create an effective strategy though, you must know your audience. Social media is both an art and a science. There are certain strategies proven to work (science), but the art lies in knowing your audience. Consider these questions:

- What types of posts do they respond best to (e.g., images, links, questions, quotes)?
- How many posts per week do they prefer?
- What times of day do they best respond?

As you gain answers to these basic questions, you'll start to see your communication through social media rise to a new level of effectiveness.

Unfortunately, social media changes rapidly. Different platforms will continue to rise and fall. Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms will continue to change. To stay current, you'll need to rely on a variety of blogs, news services, and expert profiles. A good place to start would be the social media updates from services like Mashable, PR Daily, and Engadget.

*Want some additional ideas on how to use social media effectively?*

ChurchRelevance.com provides a posting strategy for social media and offers some best practices for Facebook and Twitter [here](#).

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