Social Media & Evangelism

Prepared for: 21st Century Evangelism | FT-3724
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GUIDING SCRIPTURE

1 Chronicles 12:32
From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these [folks] had understanding of the times, and knew what Israel ought to do.
(Paraphrased by Wise, 2013)

DEFINITIONS

Evangelism
Evangelism is a constitutive Christian practice of community formation that re-narrates the Good News proclaimed by Jesus Christ, exemplifies virtues recognizable within the Christian tradition, and invites others into the community’s particular Christian story. (Stone, 2007)

Social Media
Social Media are web-based tools for interaction that, in addition to conversation, allow users to share content such as photos, videos, and links to resources. (Gould, 2013)

Missiology
We are digital missionaries to a culture embedded alongside our own.

“The world out there is digital electronic technology: a Google world. Good luck with saying in the past 500 years ‘Sorry, I don’t do books.’ Good luck with saying in the next 30 years ‘I’m sorry, I don’t do Internet.’ This is the language. As books were the delivery system for learning and faith development in the Gutenberg world, the Internet will be the delivery system in the Google world…What is the first thing a missionary does? Learn the language. This is the language that the world is communicating in. You don’t have to like it. God has called us to be in ministry now and in this kind of world. So, you don’t get to choose: you have to learn the language.”
(Sweet, 2011)
TWO QUESTIONS FOR EVERY ENGAGEMENT

Question #1: Are you building a Sign or a Billboard?

Social Media is the difference between a church sign and a billboard.

- Signs are attractional: you have to travel to the church to see them.
- Billboards are embedded: they are placed on people’s travel path so they have to engage them.

Reaching a parallel culture requires an embedded approach. We fit into their social network streams through exemplary or meritorious engagement rather than assuming they are looking our way.

Question #2: Are you creating Stock or Flow?

From economics theory: there are two kinds of quantities in the world.

- Stock is a static value: money in the bank, or trees in the forest.
- Flow is a rate of change: fifteen dollars an hour, or three thousand toothpicks a day.

Snarkmarket applies this theory to social media:

- Flow is the feed. It’s the posts and the tweets. It’s the stream of daily and sub-daily updates that remind people that you exist.
- Stock is the durable stuff. It’s the content you produce that’s as interesting in two months (or two years) as it is today. It’s what people discover via search. It’s what spreads slowly but surely, building over time.

So each online engagement, determine whether you are creating stock or flow. Both are necessary.

REPLICATION OF PRACTICE

Teach people to Learn Two Social Networks: Facebook and Twitter

Learning these two powerhouses, while not as popular with Millennials and under, will give you the tools to understand the other social networks (hashtag, @addresses, privacy settings)

Engage Multiple social networks at once

Use cross-posting apps or websites (such as IFTTT.com) to cut down on time sunk with the negative effect of loss of specialized engagement.

Exemplify how to engage conversations online

Only by practice and error-correction can you create an online voice. Engage in multiple arenas in multiple ways with different people to see how your voice shapes the conversation or is shaped by it.
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(Taken from Gould 2013)

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CURRENT PROJECTS

**Hacking Christianity** | hackingchristianity.net
Online blog examining the intersections between progressive theology, technology, and geek culture.

**DreamUMC** | dreamumc.net
DreamUMC is a grassroots effort to effect change in the United Methodist Church. They hold bi-weekly twitter-based conversations where all UMC folks are invited to join and let their voice be heard. Second/Fourth Mondays.

**Social Media Trainings**
Local church/regional trainings to empower congregations to step out into social media engagement.

**UMClergy Facebook Group** | facebook.com/groups/umclergy/
Inherited administrator of the largest online discussion group of United Methodist clergy (3600+ members). Teaching best conversation practices and exemplify how to converse online in a transparent way.

WORKS CITED


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Christ has no online presence but yours,
No blog, no Facebook page but yours,
Yours are the tweets through which love touches this world,
Yours are the posts through which the Gospel is shared,
Yours are the updates through which hope is revealed.
Christ has no online presence but yours,
No blog, no Facebook page but yours.

(Meredith Gould, 2013)
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