

Using the Web to Engage Your Audience

Introduction

Ministry (or discipleship) is about helping people take their next steps toward Christ.

1. Who is your audience?
2. What are you going to ask them to do?
3. How are you going to connect with them?

1. Who is your audience?

For churches:

- People who are considering attending our church
- People who are connected to our church

First Group - Do I belong?

Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, Sept 2010: 58% of Americans perform online research concerning the products and services that they are considering purchasing.

Second Group - What's my next step?

We ask: "What do our ministries need to promote?"

We should ask: "How do we help people take their next step?"

KEY THOUGHT: Most ministries build websites to keep ministry leaders happy rather than help people take their next steps.

GROUP DISCUSSION: What's the purpose of your website and who is it reaching?
How do you know?

2. What are you going to ask them to do?

For churches:

- Attend a service
- Connect to a group or a ministry
- Take your next step toward Christ

We tend to value fairness over focus.

Our tendency is to think about events at a specific time and place rather than online engagement. Our entire ministry strategy is built on offline activities.

Myth = If we unify behind a clear vision, we will succeed.

Vision + [Systems] + Execution = Results

"What makes people work is an idea worth working for, along with a clear understanding of what needs to be done." -Michael Gerber, *The E-Myth Revisited*

KEY THOUGHT: We don't need to tell the entire story with our websites. We just need to help people take their next steps.

GROUP DISCUSSION: What's the one thing you want people to do when they land on your website? Is that happening?

3. How are you going to connect with them?

Key steps:

- Create compelling content (vision, teaching, stories)
- Use engagement tools (social media, email, mobile)

Conversations form around content. You don't get to control your message -- you get to participate in the conversation.

Here are 10 ways to generate better content:

1. **Tell stories.** The stories about *YOU* are the best.
2. **Create compelling headlines.** I scan headlines and only read the articles with headlines that grab my attention.
3. **Make it scannable.** Think bullets, lists, bold type, subheadings, pull quotes, etc.
4. **Use pictures and video.** Keep videos under 4 minutes whenever possible.
5. **Become a thought leader.** That means you need to start reading something that doesn't come from another pastor's blog. And, you need to create time to think.
6. **Meet reader's needs.** You have to develop relationships with your readers to figure this out.
7. **Generate a reaction or prompt an action.** Move people or frustrate people.

8. **Be vulnerable.** Share what you're learning including the successes and the mistakes.
9. **Use humor.** Like this.
10. **Keep it brief.** I don't read long articles on the web no matter who writes them.

According to a comScore study, released in February 2011, 82.5% of the U.S. Internet audience viewed a video online.

May 2010 comScore study: The duration of the average online video was 4.3 minutes.

Pew Research Center, March 2011: Nearly half of all American adults (47%) report that they get at least some local news and information on their cellphone or tablet computer.

October 2010 study completed by SocialTwist. Using widgets built into referral messages, they found that:

- **Most referrals still happen through email.** In fact, email still has more than double the referrals of social networking sites.
- **Most click-throughs happen through social networking.** Social networking accounts for almost twice as many click-throughs as email.
- **Among social networking sites, Facebook makes up more than 78% of the usage** (Twitter only has 5%). But, interestingly enough, Twitter has a much higher click-through rate (almost 6 times the Facebook rate).

Phase 1 = Take our information. (I estimate 90% or more of church websites.)

Phase 2 = Taste our experience. (I estimate 10% or less of church websites.)

Phase 3 = Create our story. (I estimate 0% of church websites.)

KEY THOUGHT: Rather than providing information about who we are, maybe we should start generating content and conversations that help people take their next steps toward Christ.

Conclusion

Are people moving from “Point A” to “Point B”?

That’s how you know if your web strategy is really engaging your audience.