



QUESTIONS FOR
CHURCHES
LAUNCHING NEW
COMMUNICATIONS

by amy bishop

GETTING STARTED

Introduction

Throughout this short ebook, you'll find a variety of questions to help you better understand the process behind implementing a new communication tactic within your church. While there is no universal plan for church marketing and communications, these questions will guide you through research, planning, implementation and evaluation.

With ample research, strategy, intentionality and preparation, new communication channels can be a helpful outreach tool — bridging the gap between Sunday and the rest of the week. As the church continues to mission to those outside its walls, don't underestimate the power and necessity of new media in the process of building relationships.

Apply the questions on the following pages to expand understanding of your church and learn ways to meet your unique ministry and communication goals. Taking time to carefully consider and answer each question will make your communications even better.

— Amy Bishop

THE FOUR-STEP PROCESS

While it's tempting to jump headfirst into playing with a shiny, new toy, take time to follow this four-step process to ensure communication success.

1. Research

The research phase is vital for its evaluation of the current situation and church capabilities. It will look at the organization, audiences, larger goals and the suitability of possible communication channels.

2. Planning

During the planning phase, it's critical to develop a strategy with goals, objectives and key messages to reach your audience. Planning should also consider a strategy for content and engagement.

3. Implementation

Implementation is the time when new tactics are put into action. It will require consideration of timelines, staff responsibilities, individual involvement and organizational guidelines.

4. Evaluation

Evaluation should be an ongoing and cumulative process. It will identify appropriate methods to evaluate success of the new platform and ways to improve future communication efforts.

RESEARCH – BACK TO BASICS

Thorough research will lay the groundwork for a strategic communication effort. Consider these questions for more thoughtful communication.

Examining Your Church Identity

What kind of church are you? Traditional, contemporary or modern? Do you want to be viewed as cool, fashionable, comfortable or homey?

What is your focus? Are you focused on evangelism, discipleship, worship, prayer, service, missions or something else?

What are your vision and values? How do you want the community to see your church? What is your basic statement of faith, mission statement and vision for the future?

Audience

Who are you engaging with? Who will you be attempting to reach with this medium? Is it a targeted segment of the congregation, the entire church or maybe the wider community?

Medium

Why are you using this channel? Is it the best way to reach your chosen audience? What will it accomplish that your current platforms do not?

Voice

What is your tone? How will this channel further the church's mission and vision? In what ways can this new medium extend the church's voice?

PLANNING – GET DOWN TO BUSINESS

Strategic planning ensures new efforts enhance current communications. Consider these questions to achieve targeted and integrated messaging.

Set Objectives & Strategy

What is your current communication strategy? How can you tie the goals of this platform into your communication and organization goals?

How will you define success? What are your measurable objectives and goals for this new platform?

How will the new fit with the old? In what ways will this platform integrate with your already established communication channels?

What specific actions will drive success? In what specific, tactical plans can you use this platform to achieve your defined objectives?

Consider Content

How will this new channel be managed?
How much time and resources will it require?

What content are you planning to share through this channel? How will you engage your audience with content?

What are the key messages for content you will share? What will it say about your church? How can it stay relevant? Do you have a clear call to action?

How will you prioritize information you share? What five key words do you want people to associate with your church?

Messages should be

- Concise
- Targeted
- Relevant
- Compelling
- Simple
- Memorable
- Real

IMPLEMENTATION – PUT IT IN ACTION

It's the moment you've all been waiting for — implementation! Consider these questions to keep your communication efforts running smoothly.

Organizing Your Team

Who will be involved? Which staff, ministers and volunteers should be included? Why are each of these particular people or groups involved? What will they contribute and how?

How will you keep the team and voice unified? Who will manage the day-to-day engagement and implementation? What guidelines are important for you to set? What can you do to ensure consistency?

What is the timeline for the project? What are the various stages? How will you divide implementation into phases?

Train the Troops

How will you train the team? What is important for you to discuss?

Consider addressing these topics for staff training:

What is this platform? Why does it matter to our communications, to me personally and to the church? What is the policy for this channel? How can I engage with our community?

How can different ministries and departments use this platform? What does it mean to be a social church? How can this platform be used in a crisis communication situation?



EVALUATION – MEASURE SUCCESS

Evaluation will determine the success of communications and indicate when changes are needed. Consider these questions to optimize evaluation.

Learning As You Go

How will you evaluate your objectives? What metrics will you want to track to measure your goals and expectations?

Is the audience hearing the message clearly? How are messages being interpreted? Is the channel reaching the intended audience?

What can be done to further improve this channel? What works well? What can be improved or altered to ensure future success?

How can this knowledge be used in other areas? What can you learn from this for success in other communication areas? What can you learn about content, engagement and your community through this channel?

Did It Work

What defines success? What kind of growth or increase do you want to see in these areas? Can you measure number of impressions or exposures to your messages? If it's digital, can you measure traffic, links, community size or quality of engagement?

What measurement tools will you use? What type of evaluation will work for this channel? Is a survey of membership needed to determine effectiveness of the channel and messages? How can you include anecdotes and personal stories in evaluations?

Has this channel inspired your audience to action? Did something else occur as a result?

Tools To Investigate

- Google Analytics
- SocialMention
- PeerIndex
- TweetDeck
- HootSuite
- Buffer
- Klout
- Bit.ly

WRAPPING THINGS UP

Conclusion

No matter how advanced your church's communications, this handbook should provide you with steps to ensure success in your new project — it may even help improve your current communications along the way. Make no mistake, championing a new media strategy in a church will require patience and perseverance. But it's worth the effort. You're helping your organization embrace the new realities of communication in an era of connectedness and engagement.

Your church has the potential to impact the lives of those around the world every day through new media. The process and questions posed in this handbook will make it possible for you to successfully reach audiences in new ways. Through your communications, people can hear the Gospel, connect with your church and receive the love of Christ.

WHEW! YOU MADE IT

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55 Questions for Churches Launching New Communications is written by Amy Bishop. Amy studied public relations and business marketing at Indiana University. She frequently consults with organizations in communications and digital marketing.

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