

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CHURCH



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CHAPTER. 1

ABOUT THIS EBOOK

Close to [8 out of 10 American internet users](#) have a Facebook account. Snapchat reaches more than 4 of every 10 Americans between ages 18-34. More than [80 percent of world leaders](#) have a Twitter account. Five years ago your church had a choice whether you'd participate in social media. That's no longer true. Churches that don't take social media seriously will soon lose any opportunity to engage emerging generations with the gospel. This ebook is designed to be a primer to provide everything you need to know about social media and how to use it effectively in your community. You'll learn:

- Why social media matters in today's ministry environment
- How to build a social media ministry team
- How to develop a social media plan
- What makes good social media content
- How social media algorithms work (and why that matters)
- How to optimize your mobile app for social media
- And much more!

CHAPTER. 2

ABOUT TOBIN PERRY

Tobin Perry has served as a writer and editor for Saddleback Church, the North American Mission Board, and the International Mission Board, where he has frequently focused on church leadership issues. He has also served as the lead pastor of a church in Southern Indiana. He has written for numerous publications, including *Christianity Today*, *HomeLife*, *ParentLife*, *Baptist Press*, and *On Mission* magazine, and has ghostwritten for a number of Christian ministry leaders. He has served as managing editor for *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox* and as the editor of the pastor's version of *On Mission* magazine. He was also a contributing writer for Zondervan's *The Jesus Bible*. A graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism and Gateway Seminary (formerly Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary), Tobin lives with his wife and three children in Evansville, IN. For more information about Tobin, visit www.tobinperry.com.

All of the first person pronouns in this book are his.

CHAPTER. 3

WHY YOU MUST EMBRACE SOCIAL MEDIA

Jim hadn't intended to visit [Community Bible Church's online campus](#). Instead, he wanted to check out the news at the Canadian Broadcast Channel. When he saw a Facebook post referencing CBC Online, he honestly assumed he would find news—not Jesus.

But, as Nils Smith writes in his book [Social Media Guide for Ministry](#), the video Jim found at CBC Online captivated him. The online community through the San Antonio church engaged him and he repeatedly revisited the site.

Thanks to deep scars in his life because of past church experiences, Jim likely never would have considered stepping foot inside a church. But the caring community around CBC's online campus built friendships with him, giving him a view of Christianity that had eluded him in the previous six decades of life. In time, Jim committed his life to Christ and became a cornerstone leader of CBC Online.

"Jim's life was transformed because of the power of the gospel, but the gospel was communicated through the technology of

Facebook,” Smith writes. “It all began with a simple Facebook post. Who knows how God might use your next Facebook post?”

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

Two decades ago, Jim may have never stepped foot into church. He may have spent the rest of his days steeped in bitter distrust of institutional Christianity.

Social media for churches isn’t about cool. It’s not about technology. It’s not about promoting your events.

It’s about reaching people like Jim.

The church has never had a greater opportunity to embrace people who might not otherwise attend church. From 2005 to 2016, the percentage of Americans on at least one social media platform has [climbed from 5 percent to 69 percent](#). Close to 90 percent of 18 to 29-year-olds now participate in some form of social media. We can no longer sit on the sidelines of the social media explosion impacting the wider culture.

Justin Wise writes in [The Social Church: A Theology of Digital Communication](#), “Social requires action. There is a certain level of proactivity churches must adopt as the digital era dawns on us. Some churches will heed the call and move forward. Others, sadly, will not and they will not survive.”

But let’s be clear: this is not about whether or not your church will have a social presence. Most churches have some sort of social media presence. To impact our communities in an age where the vast majority of our neighbors spend hours every day on social media requires urgent action on our part.

Meridith Gould reminds us in [*The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*](#):

"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."

Jesus gives us big shoes to fill in the social media realm. Our churches represent Him. As Gould says, *"Our presence is His presence."*

What will we do with that responsibility, that opportunity?

CHAPTER. 4

UNDERSTANDING THE PLATFORMS

Maybe what makes social media so tough for church leaders to navigate is the plethora of options to choose from—and new ones seem to spring up regularly. Finding the right platform for your church may seem daunting.

But it's easier than you think. Here is a quick survey of the options out there. Each contain both strengths and weaknesses.

FACEBOOK

With more than 1.23 billion daily active users (as of December of 2016), Facebook has the largest and most diverse reach of any social media platform available today. It's the third most visited website in the world (behind only Google and YouTube). It's stated mission is to "give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected." It really doesn't matter who you are trying to reach—from teenagers to working moms to grandparents—Facebook can help. It can enhance your communication to your church family and those not-yet-attenders you want to reach. For nearly every church, Facebook should be the first social media platform you engage.

POSSIBLE MINISTRY USES:

- Share video clips from your weekend worship service.
- Build a Facebook group for various small groups, ministries, or Bible study classes to help members stay connected.
- Promote your upcoming outreach event to a specific demographic in your community through paid advertising.
- Schedule a weekly “Facebook Live” chat with your pastor where he can answer questions based on the sermon.

TWITTER

Every day Twitter’s 313 million users send out more than 500 million tweets. About a quarter of online users participate in Twitter [according to a 2016 Pew report](#). It has played a huge role in social movements around the globe, including the Arab Spring, which destabilized an entire region of the world. It tends to skew both younger (those 18-29 are three times more likely to be on it than those above the age of 65) and more educated (29 percent of people with a college degree use it compared to 20 percent with a high school degree or less). Twitter’s insistence on keeping its messages under 140 characters has fundamentally changed how people communicate.

POSSIBLE MINISTRY USES:

- Distribute encouraging quotes from your weekend sermon.
- Discover and engage in conversation about important topics in your community.
- Give people in your community a glimpse of what's important to your church.
- Tell people about upcoming opportunities in your church.

INSTAGRAM

It's the second most popular social media platform. A third of online users participate in Instagram (which, by the way, is owned by Facebook). More than 300 million people use it daily; 500 million use it monthly. Though it works like most of the other social networking sites, it specializes in visual (photography and video) media and mobile distribution. Instagram has been one of the hotter networks of recent years. By the end of 2016, Instagram had doubled its monthly active user base in the previous two years.

Women are more likely than men to use Instagram. The platform is also particularly used by the young (90 percent of its users are under the age of 35).

POSSIBLE MINISTRY USES:

- Post an invite to your weekly worship service (with the time and your address).
- Give people a feel of what your worship services are like with photos of the experience.

- Share encouraging photos/quotes from your service.
- Use a volunteer of the week post to introduce your community to what God is doing at your church.
- Intentionally show your church's diversity in the photos you post.

SNAPCHAT

Snapchat users engage one another by posting photos and short videos (10 seconds or less). It's a unique platform because posts disappear a few seconds after they've been viewed. Of all the social media platforms in this ebook, Snapchat has been the most controversial in recent years, particularly in youth ministry circles. The frequency of youth using the platform to send sexually explicit content have made some churches question whether they should participate. But the platform has more than 300 million active monthly users. It skews younger (71 percent under the age of 34), female (70 percent), and middle to upper class.

POSSIBLE MINISTRY USES:

- Pastors can give people a behind-the-scenes look at their lives.
- Share stories about what God is doing in your congregation.
- Broadcast your baptisms.

YOUTUBE

YouTube is the third most popular website in the world (and surely one of the most well-known). It's best known as a place to post streaming videos. Although many people don't think about it as social media, it has similar dynamics as Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms. Being successful on YouTube means gaining subscribers, comments, likes, and friends. An algorithm helps to organize YouTube's search feed.

It's a platform with tremendous reach into the lives of the young. [According to an article on variety.com](#), consumers between the ages of 13-24 watch 12.1 hours of video a week on YouTube, social media, and other free sites. They watch 8.2 hours of television a week. Unlike the shows on television, YouTube provides opportunities for anyone with a smartphone video camera to produce their own shows that can be distributed to millions.

POSSIBLE MINISTRY USES:

- Stream weekend worship services.
- Encourage your church's youth to start YouTube channels on topics of interest to their peers (and with ministry components in them).
- Start a weekly or daily video devotional.

CHAPTER. 5

BUILDING A TEAM

You may be saying to yourself. Sure, social media is important. But who do I get to do it? You may not feel like you have the time nor the inclination to make it a part of your job description. Regardless, you can't, or shouldn't, do it alone. Social media is too important.

To do social media well, you need a team. But you don't want just anyone on your team. You want the right people.

1. YOU WANT PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY ACTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

You have an incredible head start when trying to find social media team members compared to other roles in your church. Most people already have a social media presence you can freely evaluate before you add them to your team.

The first matter you want to check is that new team members are fluent in social media. Are they posting regularly on their personal pages? Are they engaging your content and the content of others? Do they run their personal social media feeds effectively?

But most of all, you want to see engagement with the various social platforms. *You want team members who enjoy using social media.* You can tell that by how much they actually use the various platforms.

2. YOU WANT PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOUR CHURCH.

Social media is a labor of love. You're asking people to communicate on your church's behalf. The best communicators are always advocates. Make sure the number one reason they want to be a part of your team is that they believe in what God is doing through your church, and they want to be a part of it. Social media has to be proactive. To really be proactive in social media, you need people who want to share the message of your church. Social media is simply the best vehicle for them to do so.

Once you've settled on the kind of people you want to bring on board, you'll need to turn your attention to the kinds of roles you need to fill.

Here are a few positions you'll need in order to get started.

- **TEAM LEADER.** Someone needs to own social media. In larger churches, this can be a full-time staff role. It can be a communications director who has this as part of his or her role. It can be a volunteer who is willing to lead the effort. It's hard to work a social media plan without someone who makes it their responsibility to do so.
- **WRITERS.** These are the people who create the text for your social media posts. Not every writer can do this. Social media posts are concise, clear, and engaging. Find people who can specifically write for social media. Take a

look at their personal pages for a clue. Don't be afraid to give them a sample assignment. (Such as, write 10 posts to promote our upcoming Christmas cantata.)

- > **PHOTOGRAPHERS.** If you have professional photographers to pull from in your church, that would be ideal. If not, experienced hobbyists can be terrific. Make sure the person has experience taking strong action shots. You may occasionally post portraits, but the vast majority of photos you'll need will tell stories.
- > **GRAPHIC DESIGNERS.** Graphics play a key role in social media. Think of all the memes you see on your social feeds each day! Designers who can produce cover photos, edit images, and create strong graphics in specific social media formats are invaluable. Apps like [Word Swag](#) and [Recite](#) can really help your volunteers do this as well.
- > **ADVOCATES.** You need to recruit a few active social media participants who'll readily agree to share and like the content you post. Ask them to check your feeds regularly and engage the content. This will help your work spread and do better in the various social media algorithms.

Social media can be isolating if you let it. Make the effort of connecting your team members on a regular basis for debriefing and fellowship.

CHAPTER. 6

DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN

Churches that thrive in the social media arena don't do so by accident. You might imagine some high school kid randomly and feverishly pecking away at his smartphone about whatever church-related topic that pops into his mind, but that's not the making of a strong social media ministry.

Social media ministry should be more planned than other ministries in your church—not less. The competition for the minds and hearts of your community is too intense to leave to chance.

But just because it's important to plan your social media expression doesn't mean it has to be difficult.

Here is a simple strategy to get you started.

1. FIND A LEADER.

Before you can really engage your plan, you need someone to own it. Whether your social media leader is on your staff or a volunteer, you need to identify him or her. Ryan Wakefield

of [Social Church](#) recommends churches give this person a seat at the leadership table. At least, he says, make sure this person reports to a person on the leadership team. You want social represented in your leadership discussions.

2. CLARIFY YOUR GOALS.

Do you want to better connect with your members or reach new people through social media? Your first step is to clearly describe why you want to engage in social media. Good churches with strong social media ministries will have different goals. Get your senior leadership involved in describing why they want the church involved in social media.

3. WRITE SMART OBJECTIVES TO REACH YOUR GOALS.

Goals tell you where you want to go. Objectives describe how you'll get there. Create SMART objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely). You'll find further explanation of the SMART acronym numerous places online. Google it to get a better idea of what each of those elements mean.

4. IDENTIFY SOCIAL INFLUENCERS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF YOUR CHURCH.

There's no secret sauce to successful social media strategy, but if there's anything that's close it's this—*you grow your following by engaging social media influencers.*

You have such influencers both inside and outside of your church. Those inside your church are the advocates who'll help you better connect to your members. These may be leaders in your church. They may not be right now. They are people who are active in social media and have the potential to help you connect with

others in your church. Get them to commit to sharing and engaging with your content regularly. Make it a two-way street. Look for opportunities to share their content as well.

You also have influencers outside of your church. These are people in your community who carry significant social media weight. They love your community. They may or may not share your spiritual convictions, but they share your desire to make your community better. They could be individuals (city government leaders, teachers, coaches, nonprofit leaders, or business leaders). These influencers could be organizations or brands.

Look for your community's top social engagers. The key to connecting your social platforms to these influencers is to engage their content on a regular basis. Like it. Share it. Most importantly, comment on it. Let them know you like what they're doing on social media. They'll notice this. They'll engage your content more. Get to know them and their social media goals. Look for ways you can partner with one another.

Here's a pro tip when it comes to interacting with social media influencers. Both Facebook and Twitter allow you to organize friends and followers in lists. This will help you easily look up what influencers are posting so you can interact with them.

5. DETERMINE YOUR CHANNELS.

You don't have to be on every social media channel that's out there. Spreading your church's efforts too thin is a recipe for social media failure. Understand your audience. Survey them if you must. Be on the platforms your congregation and those in the community you're trying to reach are on. It's better to be effective on the channels you're on than ineffective on an abundance of channels.

6. BUILD AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR.

At the heart of any social media plan is the editorial calendar. An editorial calendar may sound complicated, but it's not. It's simply a way to plan out how often you'll post and what kinds of posts you'll make.

Start out by determining the types of posts you want to distribute. Keep the 80/20 rule in mind. The 80/20 rule is an industry standard suggestion that says 80 percent of your content should "inform, educate, and entertain" your audience and only 20 percent directly promote your activities. Build the majority of your content around your audience not what you want to promote.

Take a look at other thriving church social media channels (specifically ones in your community). Note what they are posting (and what is getting the most engagement). *Note when and how often they are posting.*

Once you determine the kind of posts you want to send out on a regular basis, figure out how frequently you want to post. Typically, you want to post daily but no more than two to three posts a day.

The prime advantage to an editorial calendar is that you can correlate it to your church calendar. As soon as your church updates its calendar, you can transfer dates of upcoming special events, sermon series, and ministry launches with your calendar. You'll also be able to plan ahead for holiday content and easily spot good opportunities to boost posts or place social media ads.

You can either use a spreadsheet or an actual calendar to schedule out your posts. A calendar helps you see the dates better and connects them to your personal calendar or your church calendar more smoothly. A spreadsheet will allow you make more information (such as URLs you want to mention, images, and time of day) viewable at a glance in the document.

Once you have your calendar, you should consider scheduling the majority of your posts a week ahead of time. Social media content creation has its own unique pattern to it. Creating a week's worth of content at a time (at least the text) will help you streamline your time and creative energies. Use tools like [Hootsuite](#) to schedule all your posts at once to be distributed throughout the week. Facebook has its own native scheduling ability as well. You still may have changes (and additions) throughout the week, but this will greatly enhance your ability to be consistent.

7. MEASURE FOR RESULTS.

Many areas of ministry are hard to measure. Social media is not one of those areas. It's critical that you do so. As important as it is to understand algorithms and why some people in your audience will see your posts and others won't, there is so much you'll never know about how this works. That's why measurement matters. You'll constantly want to adjust your plan based upon what works and what doesn't work.

You have a variety of options of what to measure. Make sure you make it consistent with the goals and objectives you created at the beginning of this process. Set a day every week to check your progress.

CHAPTER. 7

CREATING GOOD CONTENT

Social media runs on content. Good content. Nothing will save your social media presence if you can't distribute quality content on a consistent basis.

So where do you get great content?

Here is the good news.

Your church is already a content machine. Churches, by their very nature, produce streams of content every single week. Your church's pastor likely spends 20-plus hours weekly studying scripture to produce great sermons. A typical 30-minute sermon can produce multiple weeks worth of social content.

Using your weekly sermons for social content isn't just helpful for filling up your social calendar. *It makes good ministry sense, too.*

Many people [consume content differently](#). Some people will be all ears during the weekend message. Others will catch the truth better in bite-sized pieces throughout the week in your social-media feeds.

HOW DO YOU DO THIS? HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS:

- Pull out engaging video clips of the sermon.
- Post quotes from the sermon throughout the week.
- Do a follow-up Facebook Live chat based on last week's sermon.

Of course, your sermon isn't your church's only source of social content, but it's a great place to start.

WHAT MAKES GOOD SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT?

> IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT YOU.

Smart social content producers realize that always talking about yourself on social media is a major turnoff. It's not that they will unfriend you or unfollow you. The real risk is that they'll simply ignore you. This is particularly true if you're tweeting from your church's branded account. Never, ever forget social media isn't really about the brands (even though there are tons of them on social platforms). It's about people. You are a guest at someone else's table. Have you ever sat at a table when someone constantly talked about themselves? You didn't want to stay. Remember that feeling. Keep the 80/20 rule in mind.

> KEEP YOUR CONTENT SHORT.

Twitter limits you to 140 characters, but all social platforms value succinct communication. Facebook posts work best when they're under 50 words (no one wants to click the "read more"). Turn anything more than 50 words into a blog post.

> **BE CLEAR, NOT CUTE.**

There's a place in social media for a clever post or two to cut through the social media noise. Just don't overthink your posts. When you're trying to fit a message into 140 characters, never sacrifice clarity for cuteness. When all else fails, just write the message that needs to be communicated in the clearest way possible.

> **ANSWER THE QUESTION:**

What's in it for me? Most people's social media streams are overrun with posts these days. You don't stand out in that crowd by being crazy (unless crazy is your thing). You stand out by providing content that ***informs, educates, and entertains*** your audience. That's how you get likes. That's how you get shares. That's how you get people to stick around on your feed.

> **WRITE. REWRITE. WRITE. REWRITE.**

When you take into consideration the spatial limitations and massive competition in the social space, few writing genres are as tough as social media. Don't let your first draft be your only draft. Take three or four cracks at each post. Quantity will likely lead to quality.

CHAPTER. #8

INSIDE SADDLEBACK CHURCH'S SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Few churches in the world have embraced social media more effectively than Southern California-based Saddleback Church. With close to [60,000 Twitter followers](#) and more than [150,000 Facebook page likes](#), you'd be tempted to think the megachurch has a large team and extensive budget devoted to their social media presence. But you'd be wrong.

One full time staff members and one part-time staffer (and a growing team of volunteers) lead Saddleback's massive efforts.

To make the most of Saddleback's social media efforts, Haley Veturis ([@HaleyVeturis](#)), who oversees the church's social media efforts, developed an innovative three-part strategy to reach and grow their community.

God put the strategy onto her heart during a seminary class where she had been assigned to read through the New Testament twice. Because of her passion to equip the church in the area of social media, she decided to read scripture with an eye specifically on what it might say about social media.

When she got to the story of Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well in the Gospel of John, she noticed a pattern that would become the basis of the social media strategy she now uses at Saddleback.

As Jesus engaged the woman He did three things, she says:

- He connected with her. *He asked her for some water.*
- He taught her. *He told her that He was the Living Water.*
- He shared a ministry opportunity. *She then went out and shared what she learned with others.*

Those three components (connect, teach, and share) form the backbone of Saddleback's strategy.

CONNECT. Veturis calls this the most important part of the strategy. She wants Saddleback to be more than just a logo on social media. *She wants it to be personal.* The church does this by responding to comments, mentions, and retweets. They try to engage with every single person who interacts with the church via social media. When someone posts a photo of the church and tags it, Saddleback recognizes that.

Connecting isn't just responding to people though. It's also about posting compelling content that would interest their community.

TEACH. Next, Saddleback shares practical, transformative, and hopeful content from scripture and the weekend message. "This content does a good job of standing alone, but they also make people want to dive back in and re-watch the message," Venturis says. Sometimes, they're "zingers" that make you see truth in a new way, but usually they're simply sources of hope.

SHARE. Through this part of the strategy, Saddleback exposes the community to ministry opportunities. The church emphasizes this part of the strategy least. Not because it isn't important, Venturis says, "But we know at Saddleback that our social media channels' primary purpose is to reach into the community. Those are people who may not go to church yet. We want to focus on opportunities that will attract our community. We want to come and invite them to be a part of our crowd."

For more about Saddleback's three-part social media strategy and other insights into the church's ministry, check out a recent [echurch webinar with Haley Veturis](#).

CHAPTER. @9

HOW YOUR POSTS GET NOTICED

When social media first burst onto the scene in the mid-2000s, only the young and the early adopters were on it. Facebook started out as a platform to connect college students. Twitter had a total of 20,000 tweets per day before it tripled during the 2007 South by Southwest Interactive conference.

In the early days, when a person posted on a social media platform of their choice, many of their friends or followers were guaranteed to see it. But as the traffic grew, that became nearly impossible. The sheer volume now means that social networks (particularly Facebook and Twitter) have to do something to organize the posts you see so you're more likely to see what interests you.

Facebook, for example, figures every time you open up the app, you may scroll through a few dozen posts. Facebook's stated goal is to give you ["the right content at the right time."](#) In an ideal world, they'd give you all the potential posts that could be on your feed and ask you to order them. But that's impossible. You don't have the time nor the inclination to do this.

So Facebook has done the next best thing. They've come up with a system that ranks the posts for you, using a mix of human and artificial intelligence.

The exact formula for how it does this (called an algorithm) is something Facebook keeps close to the vest. Outsiders don't know it. Insiders can't share it. At times Facebook will give small clues about it what it values when it updates (as it did when it [told us that a recent update](#) would emphasize posts on trending topics and looking at when people interacted with posts). But if they shared their exact recipe for their secret sauce, marketers would have a field day (and likely flood your news feed with their content).

Why does this matter for your church? If you want a place on the news feeds of people in your church and the broader community, you need to know more about how Facebook prioritizes content.

Here is some of what we do know about its algorithm.

➤ **ENGAGEMENT MATTERS.**

Facebook rewards when people engage your posts. It's not just as simple as saying the posts with the most likes and shares get seen though.

➤ **QUALITY CONTENT IS KING.**

Because engagement matters so much, you must share strong-enough content that people will share it. The converse is most definitely true—absolutely never ever share “spammy content.” Your followers won't like it. They won't engage with it. Facebook's algorithm will ding you for it. Never ask for a share or a like. Headlines are particularly important. Share content (from your site and others) where the headline matches the rest of the page.

➤ **YOU'LL BE REWARDED FOR POSTING ABOUT TIMELY AND TRENDING TOPICS (PARTICULARLY IF YOU CAN DO IT EARLY).**

You'll likely get a bump if you are one of the first ones to comment on a topic of growing interest.

➤ **FACEBOOK LOVES RICH MEDIA EXPERIENCES.**

In other words, Facebook prioritizes posts with photos and videos. Try not to post text-only updates.

➤ **FACEBOOK PRIORITIZES NATIVE CONTENT.**

The company's business model relies on keeping people engaged with the platform (and the ads that are on it). They'll give your content an edge if you keep it in Facebook. That means if you post videos, don't just link to YouTube or Vimeo. Upload it to Facebook.

➤ **LIVE VIDEO IS THE FLAVOR-OF-THE-MONTH.**

Currently, Facebook gives a huge boost to live video in its algorithm. Facebook is always adjusting this system, so it's unclear how long this will last.

➤ **BRAND PAGES (WHICH CHURCHES USE) NEED TO INVEST IN BOOSTING AND ADVERTISING POSTS.**

All branded content has gotten hit hard in the Facebook algorithm over the past few years. Most social media managers (inside the church and outside of it) has seen a decline in Facebook reach. The only real way to counteract the trend is by putting money into your Facebook effort through either advertising or boosting your posts. The reality is Facebook advertising may be one of the most cost-effective communications strategies you can employ. It's hard to find any other communications vehicles that'll reach as many people for the cost of advertising on Facebook.

Twitter [came to algorithms relatively late in the process](#). In early 2016 Twitter made their algorithms-based news feed the default when users interact with their platform. Twitter, too, wants to provide users with the tweets they want with little effort on the part of its users. Twitter's solution was to create a "In case you missed it" section at the top of each news feed where it puts some of the tweets with which users are most likely to engage. In just more than a year, the effort seems to be working. According to a [recent Slate article](#), users are spending more time on the platform and engaging it more thoroughly in the process.

Thousands of small factors play a part in Twitter's algorithm. Like Facebook, they won't divulge the math behind it. But we know this:

➤ **ENGAGEMENT MATTERS.**

Twitter rewards likes and shares. If you like and share content from a particular account, you'll likely see more posts from that account in the future. It also matters how much you engage a particular account versus other accounts.

➤ **THE ATTACHMENT MATTERS.**

If you generally engage photos, you'll see more photos in your feed. If you engage videos, you'll see those, too.

➤ **TIME SPENT MATTERS.**

Even if you don't engage with a tweet, Twitter knows how much time you've spent looking at a specific tweet. It'll factor that in as well.

CHAPTER. 1

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Never forget social media really isn't about brands, whether that's your church's brand or the small business down the road or the Fortune 500 company on the other side of the country. Social media is, first and foremost, about people.

In many, many situations, your church leaders will be far more effective on social media than your church accounts ever will be. Why? People will always engage other people much more than organizational accounts. In fact, Facebook's recent changes to its algorithms has given brands a distinct disadvantage.

The best part about your ministry leaders' personal social media presences is also a great weakness. Because they aren't officially connected to your church account, they'll be perceived as more authentic automatically. But if you aren't intentional about helping your leaders communicate effectively on social media, you risk sending out mixed messages about the church on a regular basis.

1. FIRST, CLEARLY COMMUNICATE THE EXPECTATION THAT ALL VISIBLE LEADERS IN THE CHURCH PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL MEDIA.

No, you shouldn't fire someone who doesn't participate in social media. You don't want someone on social that isn't doing it passionately (it's pretty easy to tell). But you do want to be clear that you expect your key leaders to participate.

Admittedly, this can be tough if you have senior leaders (such as your senior pastor) who don't participate in social media. Help them see how social media can broaden their gospel impact. Communicate the potential ministry value of social media. Be gentle. Be gracious. Be clear.

2. HOLD A TRAINING MEETING FOR YOUR CHURCH'S KEY LEADERS AND SOCIAL INFLUENCERS. START WITH THE BASICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA.

(You can't expect everyone to participate and then not help them do it effectively.) Then help your leaders understand how to communicate about your church whenever they do so on social media. Provide examples. Don't control the social media accounts of your leaders. *Try to inform them.* Depending upon the makeup of your church leadership, you may need to hold two separate meetings—one meeting for those who are relatively new to social and one for all leaders to get them on the same page.

3. DEVELOP SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR YOUR CHURCH.

Your church needs written expectations for staff members' personal social media accounts. Rick Holliday, North Point's director of ministry services, says his church reminds every new hire that [it's nearly impossible to divorce their personal](#)

[social media expressions](#) from the church's voice. People in the community will see them as one in the same.

"I think it is better approached as a training tool where churches can help educate their team on best practices," says Ryan Wakefield of Social Church. "Here's how to use wisdom on social media."

Social Church has a great (and exhaustive) [list of tools](#) for creating social media guidelines. You'll find sample guidelines from some of most innovative churches in the United States. You'll also find a template to help you create your own.

CHAPTER. 11

OPTIMIZING YOUR APP FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

It's no secret why the blossoming of social media coincided with the birth of the smartphone. The two are intrinsically connected. If Apple didn't launch the iPhone in 2007, social media probably would have been a footnote to history.

But Apple did launch the iPhone. Social media is here to stay. By the summer of 2015, [76 percent](#) of the time spent on social media was on mobile phones. When people access your church's social media feeds, they seldom do so from a laptop or desktop computer. They're doing so on mobile phones.

That's why you can't overstate the importance of your smartphone app in your overall social media strategy. Your app has the potential to boost your social media effectiveness in significant ways.

In fact, here are three specific ways you can supercharge your social media efforts through your church's mobile app:

1. EMBED SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS WITHIN YOUR MOBILE APP.

Sure, people can find your social media accounts through searches. But why not make them easier to find? Put links to your church's social accounts and the personal accounts of church leaders right inside of your app.

2. EMBED SOCIAL FEEDS FOR SPECIFIC EVENTS WITHIN YOUR APP.

Want to encourage conversations around church events on social? Whether it's a conference you're hosting, a worship night, or even your weekend worship services, embed the social feeds for your events in your app. You can even do this around church-wide campaigns and special ministry days, too. It'll allow attendees to connect and share what God is doing through specific events in your church.

3. SHOW POPULAR POSTS.

Have a place on your app that'll show the top posts of your church from the week. App users can then tap on the post and be linked to that particular social feed where they can learn more and follow you.

To embrace social media and ignore the mobile revolution we're in the midst of defies logic. They are two sides of the same coin. Your church doesn't have to do this on its own either. You'll find great like-minded mobile engagement partners, like [echurch](#), that can help you develop an app that will grow your church's social engagement.

It's time for your church to jump on into the social—and mobile—revolution.

LET US HELP EQUIP YOUR
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