

WHERE IN THE CHURCH AM I?

5 Ways A Social Media Program Can Benefit Your Church



“Starting a social media program for your church shouldn’t be done to be trendy. It should be done with a strategy of building authentic relationships between church members and their clergy, fellow church goers and most importantly, Christ. Social media is simply a tool to accomplish this in a highly efficient way for everyone. It’s similar to the way that TV and radio created a more efficient way to spread the Gospel message throughout the world in the last century. With a major difference being that social media channels are free.” - Kevin McIntosh

Five Ways A Social Media Program Can Benefit Your Church

By Kevin McIntosh

Lately, there have been several mainstream articles in publications such as *Time* magazine and the *NY Times* about churches using social media tools like Twitter and Facebook to help grow their congregations.

In fact, while the concept of social media marketing is fairly new, consumer brands have been using social media to better connect with consumers and to develop better products and services from what they discover through these online interactions.

Your church can do the same. Here are 5 benefits to implementing a social media program for your church:

1. Social media allows the congregation to self-organize into relationships based on shared experiences / interests.

Ever hear someone say that the reason they left a church was because of the cliques? Yet cliques, in terms of self-organized groups, are inevitable once a group grows beyond a few people. I’ve been in study groups of 8 people where there were cliques. I’ve yet to see a church that didn’t have cliques, at least in terms of groups of people with shared experiences, interests or spiritual needs. I think the real reason people leave churches in those situations isn’t because of cliques, but simply, they never found their own clique.

With a social media program, people can easily self-organize into groups in your online community based on their interests and spiritual needs. Twitter is a great example of this. Twitter is an online community of millions of people all over the world. But within that community you have all kinds of self-organized communities.

2. Allows the clergy and staff to form more authentic relationships with their congregation.

Your church clergy and staff have a limited amount of time for building relationships with members. Social media allows them to manage relationships on their own schedules. For example, a youth minister can connect with his students to see how they're doing through channels such as Twitter or Facebook. By following their updates, he can keep up with what all is going in their lives-you can learn a lot about a kid from his Facebook or Twitter feeds.

A blog post by the minister can be like a one-on-one conversation with the entire congregation, in that if anyone has a question or a comment, they can post it there at the blog. And by authentic engagement, the clergy can also reveal that they are human and share struggles like the rest of us. Imagine a blog post by the minister that reveals an argument with his spouse earlier that week. But in the post, he reveals his own weakness and how his faith came into play in terms of resolving the conflict in a Christ-like fashion. He can even use the post to detail the lessons he learned and for the blog subscribers to take away when they encounter similar situations in the future.

3. Allows the clergy staff to discover the needs and wants of its congregation and the community at large.

Every congregation is unique in its spiritual needs at any given point in time. Political, cultural and economical factors can have a heavy influence. So unless you're out talking to the members of your church on a regular basis, knowing what's on their collective hearts may not be easy. But through a social media program, you can simply ask what's on their hearts through a blog post. You can also listen in to any of their conversations that happen publicly in your online community (just tell them before launching the community that you may be doing so, as may others). You may be amazed at what you discover. It's really product research and development for your ministries.

4. As the clergy uses social media to discover and address needs, your congregation should grow spiritually and grow more loyal to the church community.

This is really where the seeds for future growth of the church will occur. Because if your sermons and ministry aren't in touch with the real needs of your congregation, why should you expect the congregation members to want to invite others to church? In fact, why would you even expect them to keep coming back themselves? As you use your social media program to discover the needs of your congregation, you'll be developing sermons, ministries and online content that meet your audience where there are in this point and time.

5. As the congregation evolves into more supporting relationships, the congregation supports each other and may relieve some of the clergy staff pressures.

From personal experience, I know that the greatest one-to-one spiritual support I've gotten from within the church has not come from the church clergy but rather from my Christian friends inside the church. As your online community grows into more and more groups with shared interests and experiences, those people will take the friendships offline. That can free up your staff to tend to the new growth that hopefully will happen as the congregation begins inviting outsiders into the church.

These are just a few of the benefits that a well-planned and well-executed social media program can have for a church congregation. The thing with social media to remember is that it's not about simply setting up a Facebook page or a Twitter account and tweeting out bible verses or event announcements. It's about having a strategy in place for using social media to help your church members grow closer in their relationships with the clergy, fellow church members, and of course, with Christ.

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WHERE IN THE CHURCH AM I?

How To Help Your Church Find Its Way Through Online Community
A 1-Hour Online Mini-Workshop

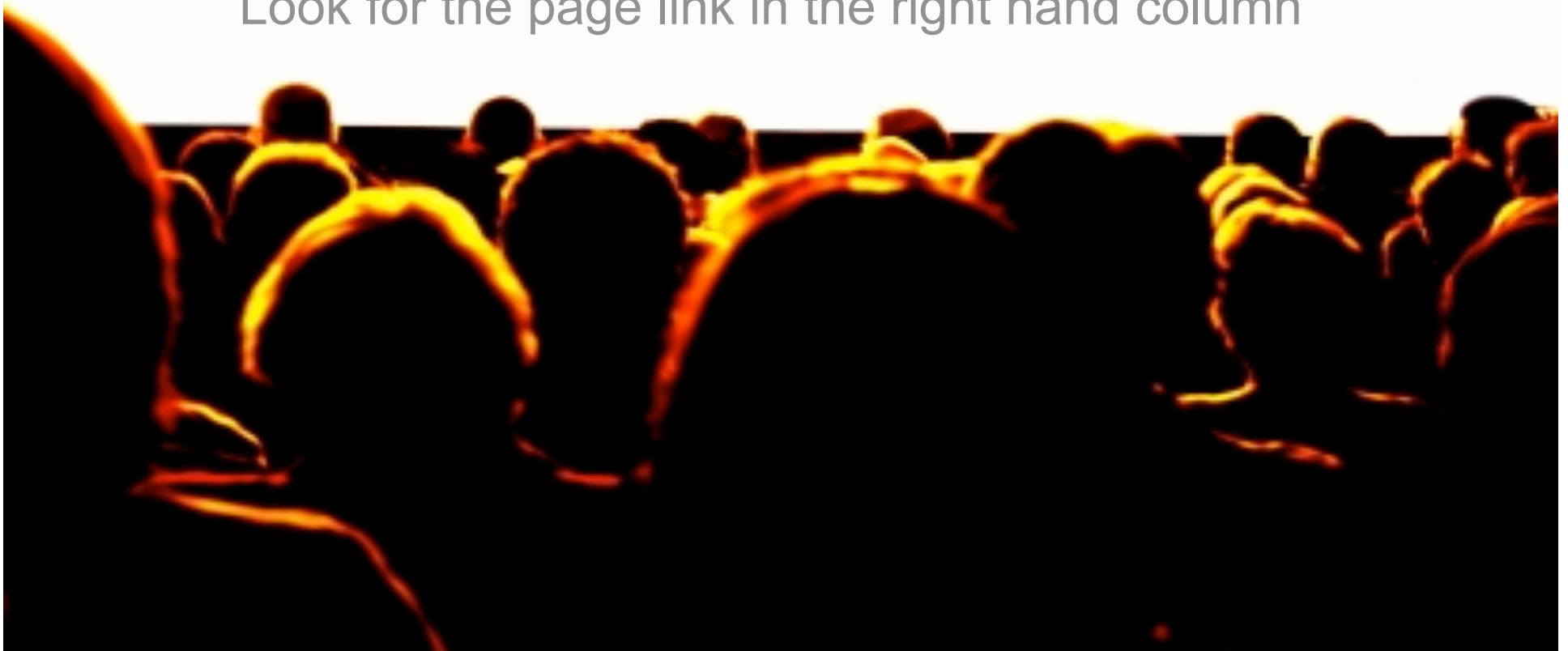


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Details at: <http://KevinMcIntosh.com>

Look for the page link in the right hand column





About Kevin McIntosh

- Location: Murfreesboro, TN (30 miles southeast of Nashville)
- 20 Years Marketing Experience, Including Over A Dozen Fortune 500 Brands
- Baptized believing Christian since 1992
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