Best Practices for Social Media

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest are fantastic tools to build community, promote an inviting culture, and reach people using tools they are already familiar with.

People are online every day, so remember to think of your social media presence as an extension of your ministry. Your team pours energy and intensity into engaging with people each weekend and throughout the week, that connection is sacred—even when it's digital. In fact, people might even be more open and vulnerable online than they are face-to-face.

So when someone comments on your page, keep in mind that they are reaching out to your ministry. When you approach each interaction from that perspective, it's easy to see you aren't working through a checklist; you are connecting with people and building relationships.

While the tools change often, our approach to using social media is based on our communication values and our mission to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Christ.

Quick Links

Facebook

The primary purpose of Facebook for a church or ministry is to engage with your community and share your personality. Consider your Facebook page as an alternative source for people to find information about your ministry. Secondly, social media is a great way to market and promote events, messages, and weekend announcements.

How to Use Facebook

The church Facebook page is an important source of community, connection, and information for specific events and campus happenings. This is where you can:

- Provide details about your events (using the Events page)
- Keep your online community informed
- Get instant feedback and notification of needs and prayer requests
- Encourage followers with God's Word
- Share ministry vision and serving opportunities
- And much more

When to Use Facebook

Add this communication channel to your checklist for all events, news, updates, and announcements, and refer people to your Facebook page in your talk notes and printed materials. Whenever a ministry team hosts an event or submits an announcement, make sure it's included in your Facebook communication in some way.

The Events section benefits attendees by providing them with vital information in advance, which can cut down on confusion or questions. Providing these details also gives them a way to share the same information with their friends.

Other Platforms: Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest

Most of the information in this document addresses Facebook specifically, but the concepts can also be applied to other social media platforms. Churches have the option to set up accounts on other social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. Remember, if you set up an account with these platforms, you must commit to keeping them updated regularly.

When you name these other social media accounts try to be as uniform as possible; if your name is different on every social platform, your attendees will have a harder time finding your feed.

Begin With the Basics

Facebook:

- Timeline – This is where you post and schedule status updates, pictures, videos, etc. to engage your followers.

- News Feed – Followers of your page will only see updates in their personal News Feeds when they are posted by the page admin.

- Profile Photo – Remember that your profile photo represents your brand and should be used for all social media accounts. Make sure it's professional and represents your ministry in a positive light.

- Cover Photo – The Facebook Cover Photo can change based on the current series you're in or major events you may be having. Cover Photo files can be edited to include experience times and are uploaded by the campus Facebook page admin.

- Admin Panel – This is where you can schedule posts, find insights for your page, set up your page preferences, and assign admin roles.

Other Platforms:

- @ - The "@" sign is used to call out usernames in tweets or Instagram posts and link to a profile page on Facebook. When a username is preceded by the @ sign, it becomes a link to the user's profile.

- Direct Message - Also called a DM or message, these tweets are private between the sender and recipient. Tweets sent over SMS become DMs when they begin with "@ username" to specify the recipient.

- Retweet – A retweet is the act of forwarding another user's tweet to all of your followers on Twitter.

- Hashtag - The # symbol is used in social media posts to identify and track messages on a specific topic. Several social media platforms use hashtags including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Important Tips to Remember

- **Represent Christ and the church well.**

- Use correct spelling, grammar, and sentence structure.

- Social media should be social. Ask questions and start conversations with your audience. Don't just post to-dos, requests, or informational posts. Plan posts, images, and tweets that get people responding and commenting.

- Whenever possible, avoid using abbreviations or social media shorthand (e.g. LOL, u, ur, etc.). If character restrictions are an issue, choose your cuts wisely. Use an image or video to convey what you can't in 140 characters or less. If you absolutely need to cut some characters, some examples of acceptable abbreviations for use in social media include:
    o Days of the week or months (ex: Wed, Jan 29)
    o Using numbers for dates (ex: 1/29/14)
    o Adjusting 'with' to 'w/'
    o Using symbols like & and @
    o Using numerals for 0-9 rather than spelling them out

- When taking and selecting photos or videos, comply with appropriate privacy policies. For example:
    o Use crowd shots
    o Avoid using pictures of children
    o Obtain written permission for pictures of individual adults or minors

- Only use quality video, which includes good audio. Do not post videos of a public performance of music (e.g. worship or intro songs) if you don't have the broadcast rights to them.

- Always support a video with a caption, description, or post sharing the facts in the video. Don't make the person re-watch the video to make note of the time or location of an event.

- Keep your branding standards in mind, and only use images that support your brand and ministry.