



A Short Plan to Help Congregations Launch Social Media Evangelism Outreach Programs

The new world of Social Media can be a bit daunting. There are myriad opportunities to choose from and new technologies to master. Congregations can conquer these, however, by taking one step at a time and following a plan.

Eventually, congregations should begin using four major web-based tools: Facebook, Twitter, Blogging and perhaps a Static Website. The Static Website is becoming less important as blogging technology improves.

We recommend you start with **BLOGGING** for these reasons:

1. Blogs are easy to set up.
2. Blogs are inexpensive.
3. Blogs drive the search engines on the web and will make all your other online efforts more effective.
4. Blogs act as a hub for all other internet activity.

STEP ONE: Plan ahead

The biggest problem for first-time bloggers is starting strong and fizzling in a week or two when the ideas for content start to dry out. To avoid this pitfall, sit down with your evangelism team and brainstorm. Come up with 50 topics and write them down in a rough order. Type them into a spreadsheet. You can rearrange, abandon or expand the ideas later, but having 50 solid themes will give you direction. Cover community issues, congregational programs, church seasonal issues, trends in the church, commentary on news, spotlight members or staff and their special interests or gifts.

STEP TWO: Start writing

Write your first 4-8 blog posts. They will probably be introductory in nature. Assign topics to different members to spread the workload out a bit and add a variety of voices.

STEP THREE: Choose a blogging platform and start exploring

There are many possibilities—just search for “blogging platforms.” We will reference Wordpress in this tutorial as it is one of the most versatile and popular platforms.

Go to wordpress.com register a dedicated url. It costs \$17 per year, but is worth it as you will be able to control the site without intrusive advertising. Follow the directions to setting up your blog. You will be asked to choose a theme or template. We recommend that you choose one which will allow you to customize your site with your own images and backgrounds.

From this point you’ll find your way in learning the blogging software. It can be a bit intimidating at first, but use online forums to find answers to your questions.

STEP FOUR: Follow a plan

Blogs have to be active to be effective. Without a plan it will be a challenge to maintain. In the right-hand column you’ll see a formula used by many successful bloggers.

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A FORMULA FOR BLOGGING SUCCESS

EVERY

- 1** day Post a short **blog**. If that seems impractical aim for at least two posts a week. Frequency helps attract search engines and establishes you as an active presence, worthy to be followed on Facebook and Twitter.
- 7** days Gather your posts weekly into a **newsletter**. You might want to supplement with last week’s sermon or congregational announcements. This will help you collect names and addresses.
- 30** days Offer something special online for people to look forward to. An **online discussion** on a current study topic might be one idea.
- 4** months Offer a **more comprehensive offering**. Perhaps a quarterly devotional or inspirational article or calendar.
- 6** months Hold some sort of **event**. Businesses often make these online events, but congregations could make them community-based events or programs.
- 1** year Provide one important **report**. It could be your congregational annual report with descriptions of all the programs your congregation has accomplished and plans for the future.

We’ll cover the next steps in a later report. This should be enough get you going!