



A Social Media Guide for Churches



**Terrace Crawford**

# **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE**

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## INTRODUCTION

This quick-start Social Media guide was designed to help leaders of churches and organizations launch. With a basic understanding of Social Media and a little time you can increase your reach to your community. This eBook contains highlights of the core basics of Social Media as well as some tips for starting out right.

## UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA

"**Social Media**" has been around since the inception of the World Wide Web – the Internet. People have connected online and engaged in a social context since then; however, it's only been in the last 10 years that we have seen users engage on social websites and platforms the way they do now.

Publishing content has become exponentially simpler over the few years, thanks to the mediums and technologies we now use. Web users now find it much easier to create and upload content to their social networks and web communities all over the world. This shift has been well embraced.

For businesses, this shift has resulted in consumerism and has paid off well. In fact, if you are a company that does not use Social Media to reach your customers you are ultimately bankrupting your business. This same point could be made with Christian organizations. If you lead an organization or ministry and are not leveraging Social Media, you are ultimately curtailing the growth of your mission for Christ.

Whether your business is listening and engaging or not, people are having conversations ... and let's be honest, it's better to be part of the conversation, right? We sure think so!

Over the last several years, there has been an explosion of growth in popular social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, and many others. It's safe to say that the era of social media is just getting started, and the use of *social media* will only rise over time.

## PLATFORM HOMEWORK

- What are the current social media channels we use?
- What behavior am I trying to drive, and to what end?
- Of the social channels out there, which types lend themselves to the specific products and/or services I/we offer?
- Who is my target audience, and what do I know about their online behavior?

## UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Deciding where to focus your energy on social media can be a confusing process, as time is short and resources are limited. It's easy to get distracted by the buzz and articles touting the next big thing that brands "must do." The best thing is to start out small and build from there. As with any social channel, though, the more thought and strategy you put into your implementation plans, the greater your chance of success.

### **What are the different types of social channels?**

Not all social media sites and platforms are created equal, and each social channel won't always work the same way in helping users reach their goals. In looking across the spectrum online, it helps to organize your social options into categories. By looking at groups of channels with common themes, it is easier to frame your decisions about when, where, who, and how best to engage with your community online.

The easiest way to break up the categories is to think of them as owned, rented, and occupied. Here's how each of these categories break down:

#### **Owned properties**

Owned properties may include blogs, or homegrown social networks, and they can be internal or external. The main difference with this category is that you literally own the channel rather than occupying a page on a platform that is owned by someone else. It may be on your primary site or on another domain, but it is fully under your control.

#### **Rented properties**

Much like renting an apartment, a user occupies a portion of a channel with the permission of the owner. Sometimes there is a cost involved, but in the world of social media, that doesn't happen often. Examples are: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and Pinterest fall into this category. Facebook owns its site, and you're simply managing a presence on it. You may have official claim to the page, but you have no claim to the platform itself or a say in how it may change.

### **Occupied properties**

This category is the most removed from your control. Your company might have a designated person who interacts and engages in an occupied property, but there is no ownership of any kind, and these channels can be changed at any time.

*Reddit* is probably the most popular example. Your staff member might choose to frequently participate in forums or community sites in either an official or unofficial capacity, but always on behalf of your organization.

Conversations and engagement may take place across all three of these social channel categories, but before you dive into any of them, it's important to take some time and think through your channel management plans and participation strategies. As a representative of your brand, you have the opportunity to add unique perspective and value to whatever channel will work best for your organization or ministry.

### **Which network should you sign up for first?**

There is no right answer to this question. Each ministry will have their own preferences, and the key, in my opinion is what channel will allow you to connect with your audience best? A good starting point for any organization is to visit [KnowEm.com](https://www.knowem.com). This site allows you to register your brand name across more than 500+ social networks. This will help to ensure that your name will be registered where you need it to be, regardless of which platform you end up deciding is right for your brand.

## CREATING YOUR CONTENT

### **Purpose**

Have you thought about your purpose and mission as an organization\brand? When you begin to create your content, knowing what your mission, vision and values are key to determining what content you produce and ultimately share online with the rest of the world.

As you build your social media presence online as a brand, you will want to make sure you develop a social media strategy that will work for you – and your organization.

What is a Social Media Strategy?

Your social media strategy should answer these questions: What is our goal as a brand? What does our content look like? When do we post our content? Who is responsible for moderating content?

### **Know Your Audience**

Before you start posting on social media, you want to really know your audience. If you are a church leader, you'll want to think through the demographics of your congregation.

### **Engage Your Followers**

One of the biggest mistakes organizations make as they build their social media presence is to ignore their current audience. If you already have “fans” or “followers” who are tracking along with you and are subscribing to your content, you should work to engage them. Ask – “What type of content do my current

followers like?” “Why have they stuck around to listen to me\us?” As you build, think “quality” over “quantity.”

### **Do a Little Research**

Before you get too far here, you should take a critical action step. Ask yourself what organization, church or brand really models excellence on social media? Make a list of 3-5 organizations in your field, then search for their social media profiles to see what they are doing. How do they engage with their followers? What content are they posting?

### **Choose Your Channels**

What social media platforms do you currently use? Should you add others to the mix? My advice is to start small. Managing several channels can be overwhelming at first. You might choose to spend most of your time and energy on just a couple of platforms. Maximize your time on each of your channels. Consistency is key here. Once you find your rhythm you might choose to grow whereby adding additional platforms as you are able to manage them – creating quality content for your followers\subscribers.

### **Spreading Your Message**

What do you want to be known for? Is your message insanely specific? As you move forward you will want to create a clear message through your posts online that will not only attract followers but one that will add value to their life, so they’ll stick around. If you have more than one person (that’s You!) on your staff, you might decide to gather them in a room at this point and simply ask them “Do you know what our purpose is?” and “Do you know why we exist?”



## **Define Roles**

Whether you have a staff of 3 people or 50, you need to determine who is creating, curating, and communicating your message on social media. This is a critical part of your social media strategy. You need to know who is responsible for scheduling your content, moderating the content, and make sure your message is clearly communicated to those who are receiving it.

## **The Numbers**

One thing that will help measure the success of your engagement will be the analytics on your social media channels. You will need to have someone set aside time each week to go through your analytics. This will help you determine what posts are working, where your followers are coming from, and where things should be improved.

## LEARNING TO MAXIMIZE YOUR TIME

Social media is fun but can be very time consuming too. Just ask a middle school student or perhaps an adult who loves watching videos on YouTube. In 5 seconds flat you, like them, can find yourself literally sucked in to countless vids of kittens.

Learning ways to maximize each of your efforts will make everything you do online more successful. While everyone should create their own strategy that will help them meet their goals, there are some ways that you can maximize your time by processing things so you can get on to other things.

There are some tips that will help you and your staff to maximize your time (and efforts) on social media. We will share some of them with you here:

### **Set boundaries**

Nothing can eat up your productive day like social media, when it's not managed. One of the things you simply must do in order to maximize your time and efforts is to set appropriate boundaries for yourself (and your team). To ensure that you keep boundaries, and respect your time, you should have a plan when you are using social media.

Here are a few ideas:

1. Choose the social networks you will use.
2. Determine what your goals are for each network and have content ready to share.
3. Set a focused amount of time you'd like to spend on each platform.
4. Post your content and quickly shut down (or sign-off) your channel.

### **Schedule Your Content**

One of the best ways to maximize your time online is to use web tools to help you share content. Social Media users will often use web apps to schedule out content for their audience. There are many tools available, so you'd have to find

your preference here, but a few examples are: Buffer, Social Report, Social Bro, EveryPost, Social Oomph, etc.

### **Include a Call-to-Action**

Posting something with a call to action will often cause further engagement and you will get positive results. If you post and no one comments, likes, or shares, you may consider posting something different.

Here are some examples:

- Share your thoughts in the comments ...
- What do you think about XX ...
- Tag a friend who you think would be interested in this...
- Sign-up below if you'd like to be a part of this event ...

### **Guest Posting on your Blog**

Allowing others to guest posts on your platforms will help you find a whole new audience for your message and gives you great content to repurpose on your own blog later. Quite often when someone gets the opportunity to write for you, they will often share with their audience as well. This expands your reach organically, and quite honestly, it is wonderful to be able to partner with others in this way.

### **Focus Your Content**

If your content is not engaging with your audience you should ask yourself if you should be posting or sharing something different. Be smart and don't waste time on things that aren't working for you.

## **Create a list of Content to Re-share**

Sharing your content more than once will help you reach an audience that might not have seen it the first time. It is no surprise that people who follow your social media accounts may catch 15% or less of your posts. One of the things that is most telling is analytics. This is how you adequately measure how your posts are performing for you and how far your audience reach is. After you share post with your followers, you may subsequently check out your analytics to see which posts are getting the most traction and then create a list of posts that you plan to share again at a later time. Reposting your content is not redundant, but it is rather in your best interest to become more effective in reaching your audience.

## **Image Stock Piling**

Stock photo websites are certainly helpful upon posting your content (see some examples in our section on online resources), but there when you are in a creative flow it certainly helps to have a batch of images you can quickly grab to post to your Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest channels.

## **Editorial Calendar**

One of the most things that may prove most helpful to you and help maximize your time may be an editorial calendar. This will help you layout your week -- or month -- and give you a blueprint (or plan) for when you will post your content on social media. We illustrate this in one of our Done For You Resources (see the weekly Social Media Calendar).

## **10 PRACTICAL STEPS TO HELPING YOU GET BETTER NOW**

1. Secure social accounts even if you aren't planning on using them.
2. Secure social handles (same on everyone if possible).
3. Make sure there is consistent colors on every platform.
4. Ensure the MAIN logo is used on every platform.
5. Determine who will proof or moderate your content.
6. Set up templates for design\images needed (banners, graphics).
7. Begin building relationships online (follow others).
8. Be social (like, favorite, retweet and reply).
9. Share great content with your audience.
10. Be consistent on all your channels\platforms.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

KnowEm - <http://www.knowem.com>

### Facebook Applications:

- PostPlanner.com
- Heyo.com
- Tabsite.com

### Twitter Applications:

- TweetDeck.com
- Hootsuite.com
- ManageFlitter.com
- SocialBro.com

### Blogging Applications:

- WordPress.com
- Tumblr.com

### Social Media Monitoring Applications:

- SocialReport.com
- BrandWatch.com
- Radian6.com

### Social Media Influence Analysis:

- Klout.com
- Traackr.com

### Social Media Analytical Applications:

- Metricly.com
- UberVu.com

- TwentyFeet.com
- Share as image – <http://shareasimage.com>  
The fastest way to double your social engagement. Turn images or text into viral, eye-catching, micro-content that you can share in seconds!

#### Social Graphic Creators:

- Share as image – <http://shareasimage.com>  
The fastest way to double your social engagement. Turn images or text into viral, eye-catching, micro-content that you can share in seconds!
- Canva – <http://www.canva.com>  
Amazingly simple graphic design. You no longer have to go to school to be a graphic designer. Canva is an intuitive platform that allows anyone, no matter what their background or experience, to piece together quality graphic design.

#### Royalty Free Photo Sites:

- Unsplash – <http://www.unsplash.com>
- Picjumbo – <http://www.picjumbo.com>
- Gratisography – <http://www.gratisography.com>

#### Paid Stock Photo Sites:

- iStockPhoto – <http://www.istockphoto.com>
- Dollar Photo Club – <http://www.dollarphotoclub.com>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Terrace Crawford** is an entrepreneur and youth worker-at large, with an affinity for Social Media. Crawford, named as one of the Top 100 Christian Leaders to Follow on Twitter, serves church leaders (particularly youth workers) through his blog, and weekly podcast, [This Week in Youth Ministry](#) (available on iTunes). Terrace frequently speaks on the topics of Leadership, Social Media, and Youth Ministry. He authored “Going Social: A Practical Guide on Social Media for Church Leaders (Beacon Hill Press)”, and was recently named as Young Influencer of the Month (July 2016) by Thom Rainer, President of LifeWay Christian Resources.

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