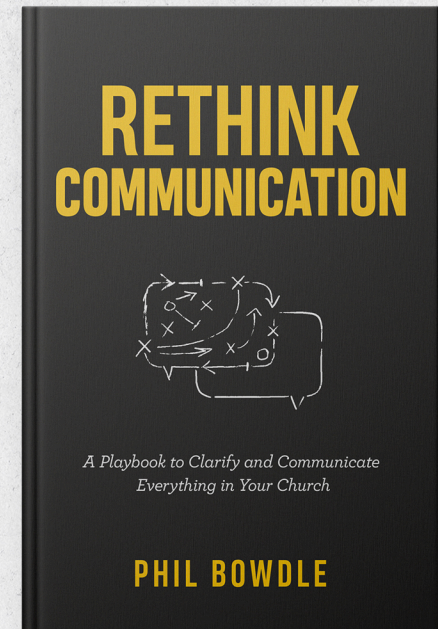


SOCIAL MEDIA PLAYBOOK

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RETHINKCOMMUNICATIONBOOK.COM

It's easy to start a social media account for your church.

It's far more challenging to actually be effective on social media.

Gone are the days of debating whether or not churches should be using social media. According to Pew Research Center, nearly two-thirds of all adults are active on social media. If we're going to be effective as the church in reaching our culture today, it's critical for us to take a serious look at how we can utilize social media for ministry.

Through my years in ministry as a communication and creative leader, I've talked to a lot of pastors and church leaders about social media. The interesting thing I've found is that they all seem to experience the same challenges and frustrations.

Almost every church I talk to is unsure of their strategy, overwhelmed at trying to keep up with posting, and frustrated that they're not getting more engagement.

So how do we fix that? It starts with building a solid foundation and a social media communication plan.

□ Step 1: Start with why.

It's easy to start a social media presence these days without ever defining what the purpose and strategy is behind it.

Why are you using social media in the first place? What are you hoping to accomplish? What's your strategy to help get you there? If you're doing it just because everyone else is doing it, or you're just looking for a new place to post your bulletin announcements, don't waste your time.

For us at West Ridge Church, our social media strategy is to inform, engage, and encourage our audience. What does that practically look like for us?

Inform

We inform our audience through sharing next steps and opportunities that would add value to their lives. We share stories of people who have been impacted by what we offer at the church and give people a clear call to action for how they can take their next step.

Engage

We engage our audience through building community and conversation. Social media is more like tennis than bowling. It's about two-way interactions through listening and engaging with our audience. As a church, we're intentional about sharing stories, humor, and prayer requests that foster conversation and engagement.

Engagement doesn't end with the content you post. It starts there and provides a platform to engage with anyone who is taking the bold step to engage with you on social media.

Encourage

We encourage and resource our audience through helpful content, Scripture, resources, inspiring quotes, and challenges for the day. There's a very real possibility that what we share may be one of the few positive posts they see all day in their feeds. That's an opportunity for us to share hope, love, and encouragement.

❑ Step 2: Establish your social media platforms.

Facebook? Twitter? Instagram? Snapchat? Pinterest? The options are endless, and it can be difficult to know where to start. Before you create a bunch of accounts, here are a few things to consider. What platforms are actively being used in your congregation? What platforms are being used in your community or the demographic you're trying to reach? The answer to those questions can make all the difference in deciding where to start.

Once you have your list, you have to identify what your bandwidth looks like as a whole for being able to post, monitor, and respond on each of the platforms you've chosen. Remember, slow and steady trumps fast and unsustainable. Focus on building a solid presence your audience can rely on.

❑ Step 3: Define your target audience.

Who is our audience? What do they value? What type of content are they looking for on each platform?

As church communication leaders, we have to think like our audience, not staff members. Staff is looking for promotion and awareness. Our audience desires relationship, value, and engagement.

This is the kryptonite for most church social media accounts. The vast majority of churches get their start in social media with a "what's in it for me" mentality. Every post seems to be asking people to sign up, show up, or share.

To be successful with social media, you have to deposit more than you withdraw and share content that will add value to your audience. Take the time to define the audience you're trying to reach. This step will help you become an advocate through what you share.

❑ Step 4: Outline the content you want to share.

The content you share should be an overflow from your strategy. As you work through your strategy, identify the types of content and sources you can utilize. If you ever find yourself stuck on what you could be posting, here are some practical ideas to get you started:

Inform	Engage	Encourage
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Events and programs• First-time guest resources• Tease the topic or service for that week• Key next steps you're announcing in service• Volunteer opportunities• Generosity initiatives• Small group/Sunday school opportunities• Baptism• Membership• Teaching series	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions around the sermon topic• Stories of life change• Ask for prayer requests• Behind the scenes• Photos from events/services• Respond to current events and trending topics• Video content from services• Set list of worship songs used in services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bible verses• Repost audio/video from sermon• Inspiring quotes• Challenge for the day• Helpful articles/books• Memorable quotes from sermons

These are all just broad ideas. How you bring these ideas to life is by infusing them with your unique story and voice as a church.

❑ Step 5: Create a communication schedule.

Now that you have ideas and content sources in place, the next step is to build a communication schedule.

The best place to start is by establishing a weekly rhythm for each of your platforms. Once you decide on the platforms, number of posts per day, and the type of content you want to share every week, you can build a weekly rhythm for your social media communication plan.

Having a weekly rhythm in place takes much of the guess work out of what you should be posting. It gives you a starting point. Now you can fill in the gaps with other content that would be timely or engaging to your audience.

❑ Step 6: Assemble your toolbox.

There are hundreds of tools you can utilize to help you create engaging content on social media. Here are a few of my favorites:

Social Media Scheduling and Monitoring

- [SproutSocial.com](https://sproutsocial.com)
- [HootSuite.com](https://hootsuite.com)
- [BufferApp.com](https://bufferapp.com)

Design Tools

- Web: [Canva.com](https://canva.com), [DesignFeed.io](https://designfeed.io)
- Software: Adobe Photoshop, Pixelmator
- Photos: [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com), [PixaBay.com](https://pixabay.com), [RocketRepublic.com](https://rocketrepublic.com), [Pexels.com](https://pexels.com)
- Graphics: [GraceWayMedia.com](https://gracewaymedia.com), [CreativeMarket.com](https://creativemarket.com), [GraphicRiver.net](https://graphicriver.net)

Where do I go from here?

Social media is hard work, but it's worth it.

Don't be afraid to fail.

Start somewhere.

While it's good to engage with your audience, avoid getting sucked into the social stream.

Try new things, take risks, and don't forget it's about relationships, not follower count.



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