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EFFECTIVE MEDIA TOOLS FOR CHURCHES



By

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EFFECTIVE

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that the world has changed a lot in the past year. However, it might take a rocket scientist to understand what steps to take next when it comes to the media channels that help us tell the story of what God has called you to do. Whether you are a local church, itinerant minister, or nonprofit doing great work in the world, media is going to be a part of your tool box to build your mission in the 21st century.



MEDIA TOOLS FOR CHURCHES

By Andrew Burchfield

What is media? The root of the word is Latin for “medium,” the “middle,” or the “in-between” of something. Newspapers are a medium that connect readers to information. Television is a medium that brings entertainment and live sports to the average home. Media is also the medium that connects our message of the Gospel to so many people who have never experienced it. When you put a slide up on your screen that shows the words of a scripture or passes along information, that’s media. Ever hear a preacher on the radio? That’s media. In the early 2000s when I really started my media career, the “church world” was so infatuated with the media possibilities that we lost sight of what the purpose of the media was. **It’s the messenger for the ultimate message.**

I’ve taught for years that the media is nothing more than the donkey bringing Jesus to the people, as told to us in Matthew 21. The Gospel is so potent and powerful that it deserves to be sent through every media channel at our fingertips.

MEDIA STARTS WITH



**IN THE BEGINNING, BEFORE GOD WAS A
STRONG IN HIS ROLE AS CREATOR.**

If we were created to be like a Creator, then I think that would make us creative.

Creativity is a muscle that must be developed and matured. It's the channel that gives us the framework to be flexible and free while adding a foundation to the premise of what we are trying to communicate to an audience.

Every movie has a hidden message. Every painting expresses a raw emotion. Every song or story is a reflection of a monumental moment in life. We use the media to hold up these experiences and translate the depth of what we are trying to say. Let me encourage you today; you do have something to say! John Maxwell didn't write his first leadership book until he was 35; now he has written dozens. Every story that brings hope and healing to people deserves to be shared. There's a life experience, revelation, or a mantra that you want people to know about, and using the tools of the media is a great place to start.



LIVED

FATHER, TEACHER, JUDGE, OR COMFORTER, HE STOOD
THE VERY NATURE OF GOD IS TO BE CREATIVE.
GENESIS 1:27 SAYS THAT WE WERE “CREATED IN HIS IMAGE...”

Today every person has access to what we call “a digital toolbox.” It’s a set of channels and avenues that help build audience, awareness, and ultimately the mission you’re living for each day. New Creation Network is here to introduce what’s in this digital toolbox and to help you create a plan that is customized to your situation and audience. We get it. Not everyone has \$10,000 to spend on Facebook ads, or a team of 10 for your video production needs, and that’s why we are here. After spending almost 20 years in the “media industry,” I’ve seen churches get burned and ripped off by “professionals” (been hurt a few times myself), and in the end, no one wins. Let’s remember the goal and purpose here. **The goal is to get the GOSPEL of Jesus Christ to as many people, tribes, and nations as possible and build as many believers as we can in their faith.** Media makes this mission effective at a multiplication rate that few can truly comprehend. During a time when there’s been so much pain and confusion due to the pandemic, one thing is certain the church has learned how to leverage media to get its

message to the world. As my friend and mentor, Phil Cooke says,

“You can have the greatest message in the world, but if no one is listening, what does it matter?”

At the boom of the Internet, people went crazy over the “potential” of how many eyeballs could be looking at their thing. The problem is that eyeballs weren’t enough; the conversation quickly became about engagement. So what started to happen was that you might have 1,000 people view your video and only 12 likes (engagement). People were confused and even felt let down in their assumptions about what was possible with this “social media thing.” According to our viewpoint, this is why so many people fail when it comes to their communications endeavours. Effective media communication is multi-channel, single topic. Churches tend to do the opposite. Single channel, multiple topics. Communication trends tend to change every three to five years, so now is the time to adjust your plan for communicating with the people you care about.

Think about your parents for a second. You probably have memories of times when their approach to communication changed. If they were serious about a topic, they might communicate it differently if they were talking to you in the dining room or in a more formal setting, versus joking around in the backyard on a spring day, that would determine how they communicated. Communicating with the public works the same way: When you have something to say as a church/organization, you have to know the best tool to use to say the right thing in the right way. We want to speak in a way that people will connect, not just say what we want to say.

This simple statement will help you the next time you want to communicate something to those who believe in and support you.

We want to say _____ (message),
to _____ (audience),
by _____ (media medium).

Example:

Message:	Sign up for camp
Audience:	Parents
Media:	Hand out information cards to parents and caregivers when they pick up their children.

or

Message:	Sign up for camp
Audience:	Youth
Media:	Show a video during the service that highlights the camp experience.

I think you get the idea.

So, how do we know which tool is the right one for the job?
Glad you asked!

By using accurate data, we can create a blueprint that is effective for each individual situation. Now, I'm not a data analyst, nor do I nerd out so much that I get consumed by charts and queries. I like to say it this way, "We let the data guide us, not drive us." You can learn so much by simply looking at the data you already have. (More on data later!)

The prominent tools used today are really great at certain things and really BAD at others.

Let's walk through each of them so you have everything you need to make great media this year.

1

1.17

**million
people
who aren't
regular
churchgoers
visit church
websites
each year.**

59%

**of church
donors over
66 gave
online.**

WEBSITES

52%

**of your
Sunday
morning
website
viewers are
first-time
visitors to
your site.**

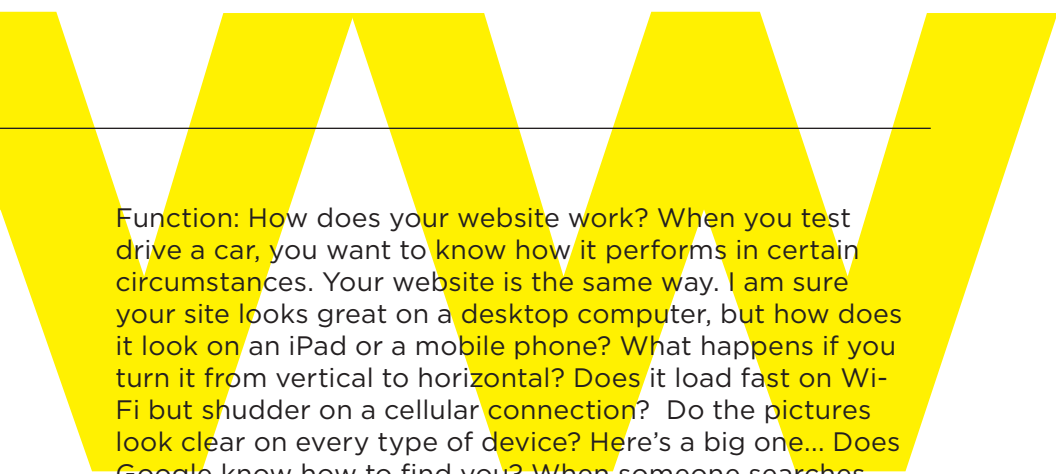
95%

**of your
traffic does
NOT come
from social
media.**

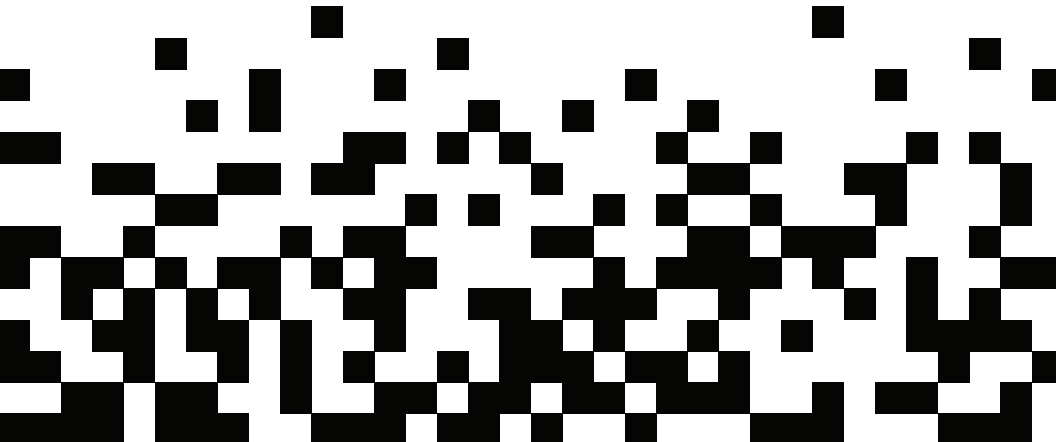


Do you have a website? Guess what? You have a worldwide ministry! Any person in the world can know about what you are doing and what you have to offer the world. Websites are here to stay and yet, many people leave their website last on the to-do list. Your website should be the most up-to-date area in the ministry. It's the place people go to receive **inspiration and information**. The data tell us that 97 percent of people will check out your website before they ever set foot in your physical event. If the website is that important, we had better take it to school and make sure that our grades are up to speed. We like to grade websites on two factors: function and fashion.

Fashion: Does the website look good!? Pictures are important, and videos tell stories that words can't always translate. Is your site relevant, and does it give an accurate picture of what a service would be like? Most websites are outdated. They have the calendar from 2012 instead of 2021, and don't give much information about what's available or what I can expect when I show up to your church. Websites need to look good and work well, which leads us to function...



Function: How does your website work? When you test drive a car, you want to know how it performs in certain circumstances. Your website is the same way. I am sure your site looks great on a desktop computer, but how does it look on an iPad or a mobile phone? What happens if you turn it from vertical to horizontal? Does it load fast on Wi-Fi but shudder on a cellular connection? Do the pictures look clear on every type of device? Here's a big one... Does Google know how to find you? When someone searches "church near me," do you come up as number 1 or number 30? If I pull you up in Apple Maps or Google Maps, are the directions accurate? All of these are factors indicating how well your site functions. A good place to check a pulse on how your site is doing is **checkmysite.newcreation.network**. Our web partner tests and grades thousands of sites a day, and you can get your free report card today! When all is said and done, your website should always be the first thing in your tool box that gives inspiration and information to your audience.



YouTube
is the
second
most
popular
website in
the world.

YouTube
has over
2B
monthly
active
users.

More than
70%
of **YouTube**
content is
watched
on mobile
devices.

People
watch over
1B
hours of
YouTube
video
content
each day.

YouTube
reaches
more 18-34
year olds
than any
other TV
network.

YouTube
is the
second
most
popular
website
in the
world.

68%
of baby
boomers
watch
YouTube
videos for
entertainment.


YOUTUBE



THE STATS AROUND YOUTUBE ARE STAGGERING. LET SOME OF THESE NUMBERS SINK IN AND TRY TO REALLY GRASP THE MAGNITUDE OF THE YOUTUBE MOVEMENT.

Over **500** hours of video content is uploaded to **YouTube** every minute.

81% of parents with children aged 11 or younger let their kids watch **YouTube**.



What do all these stats tell us? For starters, it means church shouldn't only be open on Sundays anymore. You have the power and the platform to reach people that you will never meet. People who will never walk into your church. People who really need hope and a word from God that brings lasting change into their lives. Yes, many people put their sermons up on YouTube, and that's great, but I want us to think a bit deeper into what is possible. If YouTube is the number two search engine in the world (next to its parent company Google), then this tells us that when people have questions, they are going to YouTube. I sure do.

The ice maker in my fridge broke a few years ago and I took the initiative to take a stab at the repair myself. With God and YouTube, all things are possible! Amanda and I recently took our kids to the zoo, and the stroller got jammed. (There will be no strollers in heaven, amen!?) We had disconnected some pieces to make it easier to travel with, but then couldn't figure out how to get it back together. After I spent 20 minutes attempting to be a macho man to impress my wife and two young boys, my brilliant wife, Amanda, whipped out her phone, found a YouTube video with the instructions and had the whole thing resolved in two minutes. Thank the Lord for a wise wife! My ego was a bit bruised, but my biceps were grateful not to have to carry my own two little cute monkeys around the zoo for multiple hours.

YouTube can provide content to people anytime, anywhere, about anything. I believe our generation has been entrusted with this tool, and we need to use it skillfully. It's a true time capsule for Christ. Sometimes, when I want to hear some of

the generals in the faith who have gone on to be with Jesus already, I pull up YouTube and just listen to them preach. It's amazing how, even in a YouTube video, Billy Graham will get me saved every time. Want to attend a healing crusade? Just type it in and hear Dr. T.L. Osborn, Oral Roberts, or evangelist Reinhard Bonnke preach and demonstrate the healing power of Jesus Christ! Those men are now gone, but their legacy will live forever and future generations will experience and watch these moments on YouTube!

The tool of YouTube is versatile, but if I were going to give you some action steps on how to use it, this is what I would suggest. YouTube is for **learning** and **legacy**. Take the 50-minute sermon you preached on Sunday, and turn it into a five-minute YouTube video that highlights the main points of the message. Gather some of the trusted voices around you and ask, "What questions can I answer for you?" When they give you a list, answer them by making one YouTube video at a time. A few years ago, I encouraged my friend and mentor, Pastor Jack C. Pidgeon, to really dig into YouTube. He's a great teacher and his church has really invested over the years to do it right! Today, his church has 5.8k subscribers, and its legacy will be available for years to come! Life.Church has created "Bible Adventures" that teaches kids the Bible stories we all grew up on! I'm thankful for that, because my kids are learning the Bible from YouTube! It's an exciting time we live in and YouTube is an important tool that should be used skillfully.

2

There are
3.5 billion
social media
users (that's
45% of the
population).

Facebook
remains the
most widely
used platform.

2/3
of adults are
Facebook users.

90.4%
of millennials,
77.5% of
Generation X, and
48.2%
of baby boomers
are active social
media users.

SOCIAL
TALK

91%

of all social media users access social channels via mobile devices.

71% of

consumers who have had a positive experience with a brand on social media are likely to recommend the brand to their friends and family.

The average person spends

3 hrs

per day on social networks and messaging.

MEDIA

Ah, the infamous dark hole of never-ending scrolling that we call “social media.” I remember when Facebook first hit the mainstream media. At its launch, you had to have a college email address to sign up for it. My local community college apparently wasn’t cool enough in the eyes of Facebook to offer this, so I had to wait an agonizing six months before our school was registered. Fast forward to today, 17 years later, and if Facebook were a country, it would be the size of China’s and India’s populations combined. Social media has given everyone in the world a microphone.

Think about that for a second. Imagine that you walk into your church on a Sunday morning and the ushers are passing out microphones to every single person in the room. At the start of the service, everyone and their grandma’s dog starts doing whatever they want. Talking, yelling, singing, chanting, you name it. (Anything is possible with church folk.) What a zoo that would be! That’s what has happened with social media. There’s so much noise that no one values voices anymore. Opinions are obnoxious, and the purpose of the platforms have shifted.

Now let’s not knock all of social media: What is its purpose and where does it fit? I am so glad you asked. The NEW purpose of social (in our opinion) is for **discovery** and **discussions**. Can you find people and content online via social media that’s beneficial?! Absolutely! Social media is a place to throw your content, ideas, and sermons into the world and see what sticks. It’s a place where the largest net can be thrown, and the most attention can be caught. However, once you have people’s attention and interest, then what? People use social media for searching and to



look for things all the time, but it's not the be-all-end-all that it used to be. So, go find that person who swore to you that you HAD to be on Facebook, and tell them they were wrong (lovingly, of course).

The second thing social media is great for is **discussions**. Let's face it: People love to be heard. They want their two cents out in the world; it makes them feel like they're worth a million bucks. More than ever, social media has made it possible to put everyone with the same common interests in one digital space to have conversations about things that matter to them. Instead of having a Facebook group for church members, what about a group that helps young mothers with small children, or the guys of the church who all are sports fanatics after a Sunday service? Groups grow our relationships, and when we give people a safe space to share, knowing that they won't be judged, condemned, or looked down upon, people come alive. The nice thing about Groups is that moderation piece too, but we will get into that later.

Social media platforms are the trends of technology; they come and go and the platforms will continue to change. In this day and age when platform censorship is such a hot topic, politically and culturally, **I think the wise leaders are the ones who are learning how to leverage the platforms, not completely build on them.** Social will always have its space; it just might not be the same one as 2007. After all, it's the twenty first century.



4

90%

**of text
messages
are opened
in the
first three
minutes
after
receipt.**

SMS



35

THE STATE OF EMAIL



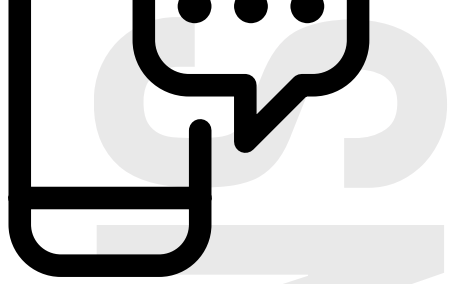
There
are over

4B

email users
worldwide.

95%

of people
check their
email every
day.



I know social media gets a lot of fanfare, but can we look at a medium that often gets overlooked when it comes to connecting with people? Texting and email! I heard another media professional say one time, “If you want the best focus group in the world, simply ask yourself.” What a great question! What do you do on a daily digital basis? If you watch tv and are still on your phone the entire time, more than likely, so are the people you’re connecting with. Text messaging (SMS) and email are two tools that are enormously effective. You know why? Well, for starters, it has an open rate of 90 percent, which means that for every 10 people you send something to, nine will open it! Surely if someone opens something, they will at least see what it’s all about. How do you communicate with your friends? You text them! How does your job send information to and receive it from you? Email?

When using SMS/email, to do so effectively, we want to speak **personally** and **professionally**. You could send out a monthly email with all the announcements for that month, so people know what’s going on. Does every month sound too daunting? Ok, dial it back to once a quarter. Boom! That’s four emails a year! C’mon, we can send four emails a year! Would you remind a friend of an important detail through a text? Do the same the day before the event. “Here’s your reminder that the parking ratio fills up fast! We suggest you get here 15 minutes early, so you don’t miss the concert!” *(Then you can send the texts out in groups of 20 numbers at a time and change the time in the text from 15 minutes to 20, 30, etc. so your parking team will be happy, but that’s an operational admin detail for another book in the near future.)*

An important word about data

When people give you their information, they are trusting you with a piece of their identity. We have to guard that. Protect it. Value it. When they open up and give you a piece of their world, they are saying, “I’m inviting you into my life because I want to have a relationship with you.” What more could a ministry on a mission ask for?!

To not leverage that information in a positive and respectful way is a disservice to the ministry, and, more importantly, you are sending a message to the people who’ve trusted you by saying, “I don’t care that you don’t want to hear from me.”

Is there a fine line with under-communicating versus over-communicating? Yes, absolutely! Knowing the balance of when, where, and how is half the game! The goal, however, is that when you get it just right, everyone wins.

In a day when personal privacy and data is at the top of the conversation, churches are not exempt from following these laws and standards. PPI (personal identifiable information) has to be protected by the organization that it has been entrusted to. In the U.S. alone, there are hundreds of laws that protect PPI. Many states (particularly California and Massachusetts) and countries are passing new laws (GDPR, HIPAA) that require databases to pass certain criteria to ensure that this data is safe. If you have the data, you’re responsible for it. I would encourage every leader to contact your general counsel to make sure that the tools and procedures you have in place to protect people’s information adheres to the legislation in your specific context. We can’t be so focused on getting people’s souls to heaven that we abuse their right to privacy on earth. This is a growing topic, and we, as the capital “C” Church, need to do our part to uphold the laws of the land.

5

ACCORDING TO THE
USPS' "THE MAIL
MOMENT" REPORT:

56%

of respondents
say receiving
mail is a "real
pleasure."

55%

"look forward"
to discovering
the mail they
receive.

DIRECT

MAIL

67%

**feel mail is
more personal
than the
Internet.**

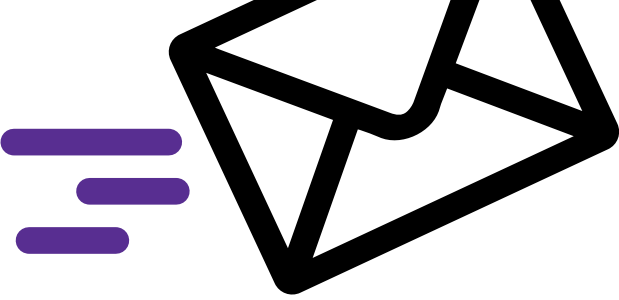
77%

**of millennials
say they pay
attention to
direct mail
ads.**

Let me tell you a tale of two stores. Two stores that provided practically the same exact products to their customers. At one time, if you needed something primarily for your home, you could go to Linens 'n Things or to Bed Bath and Beyond. At the time of the financial recession in 2008, both stores were going through financial turmoil, not knowing if they were going to see the light of another day. While Linens 'n Things thought the Internet was the be all and end all, it invested all of its resources towards online shopping and attracting new business. New customers from their perspective was going to save things. Bed Bath and Beyond, on the other hand, realized that they already had a strong customer base and simply needed to talk to them more frequently in hopes that they would become more frequent repeat customers. Well, if you want to get people into the store, give them a coupon! Bed Bath and Beyond started sending coupons via good old-fashioned "snail mail."

In a recent conversation, a friend said to me, "Andrew, no one checks their mail any more, bro!" I was quick to not accept that fact and did some deeper digging into the data. Americans will spend as much as 30 minutes a week looking through their mail, because, let's face it, even if it's "junk mail," it's still something that someone wanted to send to you!!! **People are passionate about what is personal.** Direct mail (aka snail mail) is one of the strongest reinforcers in your communication toolbox. You can talk to people you already know or people you've never met. The mail is a pillar of consistency that you're guaranteed people will notice. So, what do we do with direct mail? Send out a flyer of the upcoming events for the quarter. What about a "Scripture-Of-The-Month" card? "Your church family is praying for you this month." A thank you letter to all your donors at the end of each quarter.

What if you could pull up a neighborhood on a map, draw



a circle around homes in that neighborhood, and then send them something in the mail? Oh wait! You can! (I'll explain more over here: newcreation.network/eddm.) Most people only get two things in the mail: bills and billboards (ads). Typically, that's nothing people are too excited about. What if we inserted a bit of hope between the bill from the bank and the new dentist's office down the street? What a great time to send something positive that comes in unexpectedly in the midst of all the other negative noise. I suggest you use direct mail for **beliefs** and **bonuses**! Send mail that reinforces what you believe as a church, and how you feel about the person you are engaging with. Strong and simple statements translate through direct mail very well. Where some might see "SALE THIS WEEKEND," we can send "YOU ARE LOVED." With direct mail we can also send "bonuses." No, I'm not talking about sending everyone a check in the mail. (Although that would raise your church attendance quickly!) Send bonuses to their week. Maybe it's a thank you card for serving at the recent student outreach. Maybe it's a coupon to an online course you are offering. What about a free book in the mail that the pastor has really enjoyed? People love getting mail! It's the ultimate "We are thinking about you!"

Now I know what you are thinking: But, Andrew, does this really work!? Let's ask Linens 'n Things! Oh, wait, we can't..... the original Linens 'N Things filed for bankruptcy in May 2008 and was unable to rebuild after that, so the company sold the name to an investor who "brought it back" to where it is today. As for Bed Bath and Beyond, it has set new records in the world of direct mail, as well as having completely changed its culture and brand to being known as the store that gives you coupons and the store you'll always see something in the mail from. Internet fads will change. One day there will be the iPhone 100, but even with all these changes, people will still walk down their driveway and pick up the mail and when they do, they could be staring at encouragement that comes directly from you.

The world of media is a maze in itself, and you don't have to find your way through it alone. That's why we created New Creation Network, to partner with your purpose and show you that anyone can obtain professional and simple media communications.

BUILDING BETTER

TOGETHER



In order to go to the next level, you have to be willing to take the next steps. Currently there is no fee for talking to ministries, and if we can just help create a plan of action that you can do on your own, we all win together. We are here to make the media communication process easy and simple. In a recent session, a pastor told me, “Andrew, you saved me \$25,000 in one hour!” That’s what gets us excited! We get ministry because we are a ministry, and we can help you at whatever level you may be at with your media.



Start with the areas where you’d like to see improvement. If you like the way the lights and sound are in your sanctuary, leave it as is. If your website bugs you, let’s start there. Maybe you’ve been pastoring for a long time and you want to capture your legacy with an online video course, or finally write that book. Jesus said to take the Gospel to all people and all nations. That’s a tall order that will take all of us, but we can start by making the message available to those around us in a way that we can pass on to people we are responsible for and care about. You have a message, and media is the megaphone that will magnify that message to the world.




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