

May 2019



**A Christian Steward is:**

- one who receives God's gifts gratefully
- cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner
- shares them in justice and love with others
- returns them with increase to the Lord

# WISDOM

from ICSC strategic partners

This month's contributions come from the following ICSC Strategic Partners:



DIOCESAN



**Our Sunday Visitor**

Each month ICSC sends you practical information, whitepapers, and tips, as well as other insightful information from our Strategic Partners to assist you with your responsibility as stewards of the Church. We are very grateful to our Strategic Partners for their partnership and commitment to ICSC, and their professional wisdom is a wonderful gift to ICSC members.

In this edition ICSC brings you:

- \* how to utilize social media when running a fundraising campaign, presented by **CCS**.
- \* three steps in planning an effective parish communication campaign, courtesy of **Diocesan**.
- \* how to gather data and use it to grow your parish in multiple ways, compliments of **LPi**.
- \* five summer 'out of the box' ideas for your parish provided by **Our Sunday Visitor**.

For additional information and resources from our strategic partners visit the ICSC website at: [ICSC](http://www.catholicstewardship.org)

*ICSC promotes and supports Catholic teaching on stewardship by providing education and resources for dioceses, parishes, and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church.*

# Utilizing Social Media for Campaign Success

By Dan Altano and Christine Cook, CCS Fundraising — May 2019



For parishes and dioceses running campaigns, a strong social media presence can help reinforce the case for support and drive new audiences to learn more about the cause. Often, a digital strategy can seem secondary to your campaign efforts, but a robust social media plan should instead be viewed as an important fundraising tool to echo the elements of your case for support. The trends support this claim. When surveyed, over 46% of churches say that using social media is their most effective method of outreach<sup>1</sup>, but it is important to keep the following in mind when engaging with your community via social media:

## Find Your Effective Channels

To find out which social media channels are connecting better with your audience, it is worthwhile to start by casting a wide net and then testing which channels are creating the most engagement. Remember, you don't have to be on all social media platforms. It is much more effective to focus on the ones that work than spreading yourself too thin.

## Set Realistic Expectations

It is important to be realistic about how often you will create and post content. Discuss what is feasible with your team, and whether you decide that four posts a day or three posts a week is manageable, given your busy schedule. Consistency in posting will establish a dependable social media presence.

## Utilize Your People

In addition to your institution's posts, it is useful to encourage staff members and volunteers to share content from their own personal accounts. Statistics show that user-generated content on social networks has a 4.5% higher conversion rate<sup>2</sup>. What this means is that people tend to click on content from other people at a higher rate than organizations. Getting your staff involved can make a big difference in the attention your content generates.

## Social Media Post Checklist:

When posting, keep in mind that your posts should be:

- **Visual and Engaging:** Trends tell us that imagery and videos are effective in grabbing attention. 20% of people will read text on a social media page, but 80% will watch a video<sup>3</sup>. It is therefore worthwhile to add short but impactful clips to some of your posts to grab attention.
- **Mission Driven:** Stick to the storytelling elements that speak directly to your campaign's goals and potential impact. Avoid straying off topic.
- **Targeted to Your Audience:** Your social media channel doesn't have to be all things for all people. Create posts that are in line with how you speak to your own community.
- **Diverse:** Having a variety of posts will keep your channel interesting to followers. When your posts are redundant, you risk losing your audience's attention.
- **Valuable:** Ask yourself, "Does this information provide real value to our followers?" If the answer is no, think of ways to make the post more relevant and useful to your audience.

<sup>1</sup> NonProfit Source, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Sprout Social, 2016

<sup>3</sup> My SMN, 2017

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# Summer is Coming! Get a Plan

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If you are from Michigan, where I am from, then maybe you think it is too soon to speak on this topic, but Summer is coming. Summer is a time that many of the ministries in the parish slow down and it's the perfect time to start planning for an effective communication campaign.

## MAP OUT YOUR GOALS

1

The key to a communication plan is putting actual dates on the calendar. We recommend promoting your class, ministry, stewardship initiative, or parish celebration at least three months before the event. The first couple of promotions can be vaguer or about the general theme. As time gets closer get more specific about the event and let people know why it will be worth it to attend. You essentially want to tell people what you are going to tell them, tell them about it, then remind them that you told them. Make sure it is always fresh in their minds.

## THE WHO THE WHY AND THE WHAT

2

As you sit down and draft your plan, it can be helpful to start with the WHO. Who is it that you are trying to reach with this event? Include a picture of someone from the parish. Then move on to the WHY. Why is this important to your parishioners? What makes this different from the fifty other things they are being asked to attend this week? Finally, tell them the WHAT. Let them know the specifics and logistics. When this model is followed it inspires your parishioners first and gets them excited about the topic before asking if they would like to attend.

## USE EVERY CHANNEL

3

With Summer coming quickly I think about the sprinkler that will be placed in our garden. Sprinklers have all those little holes that ensure the water reaches the entire yard. If one of those holes is clogged the water will not reach every part of the yard. It's the same with your communications. You may say that your community is of an older demographic so you don't need an app or website, but you will be missing people if you choose not to use these channels. It's best if you use all channels and can then water the entire lawn. You don't want to miss anyone with the importance of your message. As you draft your communication plan and get dates on the books, think about what communication channels you should implement before school starts back up.

From all of us here at Diocesan, God Bless and happy planning!



# RETHINKING DATA TO GROW OUR PARISHES

We hear the word “data” thrown around all the time — in the news, in our place of business depending on where you work, in school classrooms, and now, in our parishes. The world is changing, and what worked 30 years ago, just doesn't have the same effect as it used to. We need to be intentional with our efforts to grow our church, and that includes gathering data to see if we can work with the trends we discover.

We need to move out of the “hoping, dreaming, and wishing” mindset, and instead focus on who — and most importantly, who is not — coming to our parish. Read on for the types of data that can easily be gathered by your parish staff, and how to use it to grow your parish in multiple ways.

## UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HAVE

It's well-documented that the average parishioner will connect with most areas of your parish office and information about their family structure, church involvement, and giving habits will be recorded. Taken individually and together, this parishioner data tells a story:

- Family relationships, birthdays, and contact information
- Attendance at parish events
- Involvement in ministry groups, councils, and volunteer opportunities
- Religious education registration history
- Giving patterns and history
- Sacramental records, safe environment status, and certifications

Now the question is, how can your parish utilize all this data to grow your parish? One way of doing so is looking at who is not attending your parish, giving on a weekly or monthly basis, or simply not showing up on a regular or semi-regular basis.

## WHEN THE SILENCE IS DEAFENING

For example, Baptism, first Communion and Confirmation are staples in the sacramental life of the church. No matter where some families might be in their faith journey, it's usually a given that they will send their children to take part in these sacraments. But what does it say when the first Communion class is 30 children, but the religious education class for 4th grade is five kids? Parish leaders need to ask themselves where those kids went.

And what about looking to see who is receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation each week? Are there lines full of people or just a few “regulars”? If it's the latter, it's time for the parish to ask why. Is it the time of day/day of the week that is causing low attendance? Is it that the parish isn't communicating the importance of this particular sacrament? Then, it's time to test out the theories and see if attendance can be brought back up.

## DATA RESULTS IN ACTION

During Pope Francis' Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2016, parishes around the world were asked to place a special emphasis on the sacrament of Reconciliation. Although St. Rita's Catholic Church held regular confessions on Saturday mornings, they rarely had a lot of people come. Using this “Year of Mercy” as the catalyst for change, they decided to find out exactly why they had such low attendance and see if there was anything they could do to change that.

First, the pastor used his homily to focus on the importance of Confession and the spiritual benefits to receiving those graces. The parish then announced that for the next couple of weeks, they would be adding new times for people to receive it. In addition to Saturday mornings, they would also be adding an hour before 10 a.m. Sunday Mass. The results? Overwhelming.

By the time 9 a.m. rolled around, cars were starting to pull into the parking lot, and lines were forming. Some families took it upon themselves to help one another with childcare as parents took turns in the confessional. Listening to the choir warm up as people examined their consciences' helped in the reflection process.

It was a little unorganized as people visited, children played, and wayward Catholics found their way home, but it was authentic. Rather than parishioners making time in their day for Confession, the church scheduled Confession times around that of their parishioners.

And so it's these types of results that data collection should produce and that parishes should strive for. It isn't all just Mass attendance and growing the financial bottom line (although, for a parish to truly thrive, those do need to be affected). But there are so many ways to help your parishioners grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ ... we just need to collect, document, and act until we find the solution.

# Is your parish ready for



Katie Herzing, Senior Parish Coach

Summer is almost here and all I can say is *Alleluia!* I'm ready for sunshine and beach vacations and early morning walks and time at the pool ... but is your parish ready for summer?

Many parishioners will take a 'summer vacation from Mass' ... but that doesn't mean we need to stop offering ways to engage them in the community. So what are some great, out of the box, ideas for summer?

**1.Parish Picnic w/ Food Trucks:** Many parishes have a parish picnic where a group of people slave over the food to ensure there's enough for everyone. Then another group is outside after every Mass selling picnic tickets. Why not invite a local food truck or two to park in your lot one afternoon and invite all your parishioners over for a party? This way you all get together and no one has to cook except the professionals!

**2.Parish Hike:** One of my favorite events we did with our young adult group was a local hike (about 1 hr away) with our parish priest. We climbed a mountain and then talked about faith at the top, stopping every so often on the way up and down to pray a decade of the Rosary and catch our breath. It was always a favorite event of the summer!

**3.Papal Encyclicals:** Encyclicals and summer don't sound like they go together, but sitting outside at the parish with a cold drink talking about the faith sounds like a good summer evening to me! Choose a letter (the new one on youth would be good ... or the previous one on holiness works too) and read it section by section together with some wine and cheese evenings in the summer.

**4.Prayer Experiences:** Just because it's summer doesn't mean we don't need to pray. Without a particular charism, Ordinary Time can get well, pretty Ordinary. Do something different this summer with prayer like a Taize prayer service, an outdoor Rosary walk around the parish neighborhoods, or a special meditation.

**5.Processions:** I'm remembering the Corpus Christi procession they do in my hometown each year. It's an annual tradition of an Eucharistic procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi from one local parish to the other with stops at outdoor altars for benediction along the way. My current parish does a Fatima Procession on the 13th of the month from May to October praying the Rosary, singing, and recalling the story of the apparition. Summer's a great time to start a new tradition!



The last advice I have for summer is to be aware of visitors!! Be sure your Mass times are correct on [masstimes.org](http://masstimes.org), your website, and the bulletin. If there's a schedule change, make sure everyone knows about it so everyone (parishioners and vacationers) can come to Mass on time! Have fun and send along some pictures of your beach vacations!

Whatever you do for Stewardship this year, make sure the pillar of Prayer has a strong foundation. Want more great ideas like this delivered right to your inbox a couple times a month? Join me at <http://transformyourparish.com> for great ideas to create a vision plan to promote stewardship at your parish!