

YOUR MEDIA STRATEGY

(<http://catholictechtalk.com/2013/08/13/dont-develop-a-social-media-strategy-for-your-parish/>)

A *communications strategy* is what you should develop and it should contain the following components:

The purposes and roles it plays within your parish communications. This is basically 3-fold:

1. **Informational** – communicating information out more efficiently and overcomes barriers to existing communications (i.e. heavy reliance on print).
2. **Evangelizing** – opening the doors to your Church wide for the world to see (i.e. pictures, video, engaging in conversation, etc.). As I like to put it . . . come and see. And this should evangelize insiders and outsiders.
3. **Service** – I’ve talked before about our online endeavors having a “customer service” component to them, and social plays a role in that. A phone call compared to an email compared to a message through a Facebook page are all the same. We’ve just provided more avenues for people to reach us. Yes, I know the argument . . . “I don’t have time!” Yes you do. If I email you rather than call you there is no difference in the time you’ll spend serving me.

Who is responsible and for what

4. **List out the things you do with your social stuff.** You should be posting daily, following up on comments or messages, search for what’s going on at your Diocese and the community around you.
5. **Decide who is going to do that.** And it can be a few people. Don’t just think it’s the “web person” either. Some web people are not good at being social and communicating with others. If someone else is good at that part (upbeat, positive, creative, etc.) then let them handle it and partner with the web person for design needs.
6. **How are they going to do it?** This part is where you’ll find you actually have the time because this is about planning. Create a calendar and theme your posts for each day. Look at what’s coming up and plan your posts in advance. You can schedule posts in advance but make sure you are on top of any changes that come up. Choose news sources you will look at. Set up a social management application such as [Hootsuite](#). Set up Google alerts to watch for news.

What services are the best fit to use. A lot of social services are great, but not every social service will benefit your parishioners and enhance your communications. This is the “latest and greatest” pitfall many run into. I love checking out new services under my own personal profiles and am always thinking of ways it might fit into our mission. Not all do or not enough to really warrant investing the time and energy into them. For example, there is a popular new little video service out there that everyone is raving about. I’ve tried it and I see some benefit to the short video thing. But there is another service we are already established on and is equally (if not more) popular with our audience that also offers the short video thing and therefore we’re using the one that is already working for us.

How you will adapt to change. If we have learned anything over the last few years . . . change isn’t going to stop and it’s going to come faster. Our parishioners are doing things differently in regards to communicating. Their expectations will continue to change. And we need to take advantage of these new opportunities, but that means being open to change and being aware of it. Get involved in online communities such as [Catholic New Media & Tech](#) of Google+ started by Domenic Bettinelli. Watch for tech news, which is everywhere now. And watch and listen to what others are doing around you both in other parishes and your parishioners as well. There was a recently planned focus on Twitter and Facebook for a week long event. During the event a colleague was seeing people showing each other pictures on Instagram. So we shifted and boosted our Instagram usage during the event and joined in showing them photos we caught. It was a huge hit and continues to grow every day as we’re using it more and more to enhance our messages (see [Come and See: Getting the Most Out of Instagram & Flickr For Your Parish](#)).

The point of all of this is that it’s time to put social media and networks in their proper place within our parishes. They are a part of communications, and I guarantee that if you start strategizing how these social technologies serve within your communications you will find it far less intimidating and start getting the most benefit out of it all.

How do you view social media and networks in your parish? Are they off by themselves or are they truly integrated into your communications?