

# Digital Engagement Strategy

Building Church  
Community Through  
Digital Connection

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# Overview

## Digital is no longer an option!

This resource is being developed in a season of great disruption as the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) prevents physical gatherings of any size. The church is no stranger to crisis; in fact, crisis is often the soil from which innovation grows. The explosion of digital ministry is a perfect example. In the fall of 2019, 41% of churches said they don't put any portion of their church service online for people to view. Today, 93% of churches in the United States are holding online services, with the vast majority planning to celebrate Easter digitally. The [churchonlineplatform.com](https://www.churchonlineplatform.com) has seen almost as many downloads in three weeks as they did in their first nine years.

At Historic Agency, we believe God is using this season of disruption to further His mission and expand His Kingdom. The local church has worshiped for 2,000 years, and no virus will end that. This season presents amazing opportunities for churches to share the Gospel in new and innovative ways, and our hope is to equip churches with new practices to further their mission and ministry digitally.

From the distribution of content to community engagement, there are innovative opportunities to not only sustain and engage your

current community, but also grow and expand your missional impact. In this white paper, we will address:

- \* How to make your weekend services even more compelling.
- \* Ways to connect digitally with those who are new to your church.
- \* Opportunities to engage and connect with your church community.
- \* Digital strategies for discipleship.

Before you dive-in, something important to consider: the digital changes being made to ministry will not all be short-term. We are pioneering a new future for the local church and it would be wise to consider today how the long-range landscape of ministry will change as we learn about the advantages digital provides while also navigating the new challenges and tensions digital connection brings. Read this resource with an eye towards the future as much as the immediate reality.

# Weekend Services

In this time of physical distancing and disruption, your weekend services will become even more important to ongoing ministry and engagement. In a digital context, there are certain values and considerations that must be elevated in order to see impact.

## **Tips:**

### **1. Play to the room.**

You do not have a captive audience when people are at home. The content length and quality should reflect this reality. We recommend 45 minutes or less.

### **2. Consider the optics.**

In this time of increased caution around COVID-19 and physical distancing, if you're meeting together to record your service, take care to maintain an appropriate distance from each other, especially when on camera.

### **3. Unplug the worship music.**

Having a big band with 12 people onstage is not necessary or helpful. Consider stripping down your band and vocal team and don't be afraid to do something more reflective and/or artistic for worship.

**4. Audio is more important than video.**

Yes, they both matter; however, getting audio right matters more. Use a mic that has direct pickup, rejects the room reflection, and ensures some ability to EQ so the spoken voice is legible and clear.

**5. Include slides.**

People will grow weary of always seeing a single talking head. Whenever appropriate and helpful, cut to content slides to reinforce points, Scripture, images, etc.

**6. Reduce barriers and build bridges.**

Every week, you'll have people "peeking in" to your service who may be unchurched and/or unfamiliar with Christianity. Do your best to reduce barriers and build bridges to help them encounter Jesus while not abandoning those in your current church community.

**7. Reinforce your vision and values.**

Your church is making a unique contribution to the Kingdom and has a culture and brand all its own. Reinforce those every week in appropriate and natural ways—e.g., "At (church name), we believe \_\_\_\_\_ which is why we are \_\_\_\_\_."

**8. Call people to action.**

From giving online, to serving, to opportunities to engage mid-week, it's mission critical that each week you call people to a specific action and provide the links and resources necessary for them to respond.

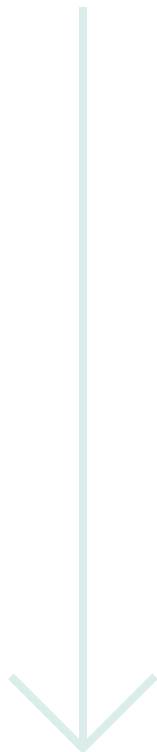
**9. Prioritize community, not just content.**

From YouTube to Facebook Live, chat features allow engagement with your community as these services stream. It's ok to archive and make services available on YouTube; however, during your normal service times, have someone hosting the chat.

# New Guest Engagement

Increased online views and buzz will mean little if we fail to move new people into greater connection while also sustaining relationships within our existing community. Moving someone who is new to your church from a digital observer to connected and feeling a part of your community is possible; however, new strategies are necessary.

Below is a 5-phase engagement strategy to help move new digital guests to being known, connected, and engaged in ministry with you.



## **UNKNOWN**

- Who is your church on mission for?
- Add value to their lives via helpful content.
- External marketing/community outreach.

## **CURIOS**

- Where can they learn more?
- Easy, low barrier to entry opportunities.

## **KNOWN**

- How do they share their contact info?
- Regular weekly touch-points (social/streams/etc.)
- Sign-up for more 101 interactive type class.

## **CONNECTED**

- Are they engaged and in relationship?
- Once known they must move into some group setting where they are more deeply known and connected.

## **COMMISSIONED**

- How can they be on mission with us?
- Digital advocates/group leaders/regular partnership
- Social media sharing/recurring giving

## Tips:

### 1. Define your audience.

Know the demographic (age and stage) and psychographic (hobbies, values, interests) profile of those you are most called and equipped to be on mission FOR.

### 2. Use tools like [gloo.us](https://gloo.us) or [kingdomanalytics.com](https://kingdomanalytics.com).

Platforms like these provide insights so you can know the people in your church and community better, help them flourish, and make strategic ministry decisions with confidence.

### 3. Create helpful content for those you seek to reach.

Too often we play to our internal church audience and miss the opportunity to add value to those who have not yet engaged with our church. If you know and understand the audience you are most on mission FOR, develop content with them in mind using language and imagery they would find compelling and helpful.

### 4. Boost posts.

Using Facebook and/or Instagram to boost posts for greater awareness and engagement is smart, but some strategy is required.

#### AUDIENCE

Build a target audience (aka - MISSION FOR) profile.

#### CONTENT

The content you boost should be valuable to that audience.



## **DURATION**

Is the post time sensitive or more evergreen?

## **BUDGET**

Spend a minimum of \$100 to see results.

### **5. Lower the barrier to entry.**

The first step for any new guest must be safe, appropriate, and compelling. We recommend inviting new guests to a short (45-minute or less) webinar hosted on a platform like [livestorm.co](https://www.livestorm.co) that is fun, energetic, informative, and provides a specific next step.

### **6. Make being known easy.**

Create a simple online registration where guests provide their email, allowing you to follow-up with them post webinar.

### **7. Host 'Church 101' classes over Zoom.**

[zoom.us](https://zoom.us) is a great interactive platform for dynamic video interaction. Consider hosting monthly online opportunities with your pastoral team to share more about your church, its convictions, and how you can serve them.

### **8. Increase the visibility of your senior pastor.**

Your senior pastor needs to be even more visible and accessible during this time. Get them on FB Live and make sure they participate in online webinars and other platforms for engagement. We also recommend setting them up with a Twitter account.

# Digital Discipleship

Digital discipleship is the use of all the tools and strategies at our disposal to carry out the Great Commission. It is strategically positioning ourselves as a church online and creating a Christian presence and witness through digital communities that increases our ability to answer questions, provide comfort, meet needs, equip and empower members, and show Jesus' love in contextual and compelling ways.

Digital does not have to be limited to increasing awareness and/or content distribution only. There have never been more opportunities to further discipleship and equip church members online. Below are a few thoughts to help you venture into this new digital terrain:

## **1. Digital Community**

Zoom small groups are becoming a powerful tool in this time of physical distancing.

Facebook Live and Instagram Live are powerful tools to engage your community while also increasing awareness. Here are helpful tips to utilize these platforms:

- \* Senior Pastor Q&A—one time per week.
- \* Regular prayer meetings—one time per week or more.
- \* Worship Leader - song request—two times per month.
- \* Promote day-of on all channels (cross promote across channels).
- \* Use Facebook Live to capture and archive the Live recording.

## 2. Digital Conversion/Salvation

Develop an online channel for people to hear the simple Gospel message and make a decision to follow Jesus. Check out this great example from [Rock Church](#).

## 3. Digital Next Steps

Using the strategies outlined in the “New Guest Engagement” section, host webinars, a Facebook Live, or other low barrier to entry opportunities to move people in your funnel from unknown to known.

The goal should be getting guest’s contact info so you can proactively stay engaged with them through email, text, DM, or phone.

ASK anyone new what their preferred communication channel is and make note of that in their profile. Not everyone loves communicating through text, DM, or phone calls.

## **4. Digital Equipping**

Leadership development works well online. Take advantage of tools like Zoom to connect with leaders, pray for volunteer teams, mobilize care and mercy, and perform other church equipping functions.

Develop webinars once or twice a month that bring deeper Bible study to those who are hungry for increased Bible engagement. Consider doing a two-month series unique to this season of required physical distancing.

Provide content for children and students unique to their experience in this season. Whether live, pre-recorded, or in a PDF, continue equipping those important audiences in this time.

## **5. Digital Giving**

Giving is not only essential to the ongoing functions of your church—it's also essential to the ongoing discipleship and development of your people.

Make sure low barrier to entry opportunities exist for giving online and that those giving channels are being reinforced every weekend.

# Think Long-Range

It's highly unlikely that we'll ever "unwind changes" and go back to "church as normal." Right now, we're in Phase I of this COVID-19 disruption. Phase II will happen when we can gather again, but many choose not to. This may mean that small groups will continue to gather weekly by video and only physically gather together once a month. Or, perhaps families find worshipping at home more compelling and choose to continue to do so once or twice a month post-COVID-19. Whatever the case, whether we see it now or not, the changes being made to ministry will pioneer a new future for the church, and it's critical that we consider *today* what those future changes might include.

# We're Here for You

Historic Agency is here to equip you and help you navigate new ways you can further your mission and ministry digitally. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us directly with any needs you may have. We value you and the contribution you're making to the Kingdom, and it's our aim to do all we can to serve you in this time!

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