



Connecting with your Community

*Why God believes 1 > 99 and
what the church needs to do about it.*

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Fun Legal Stuff and Acknowledgements

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This book was inspired by the many thoughts and ideas unselfishly shared by a large number of people working to define how to “get stuff done on social media” and how to apply this to the church. They don’t know the impact they have had on me and they may never know (let alone agree with) what I’ve written...**I owe them my thanks anyway!**

To the many virtual mentors who have no clue who I am but who’s sharing inspired me to find my voice:

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To the two most important ladies in my life...

Thank you Kim and Lindsey for putting up with me and my geeky pursuit to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Images were purchased by www.istockphoto.com. They are a great source for stock photos and help bring many of the concepts that I wrote about in a much more interesting way than I ever could on my own.

MOST IMPORTANTLY...I thank God for his willingness to chase after me even when I fully rejected him and his willingness to sacrifice His Son so he could find one lost sheep...**ME.**

Feel free to post this on your blog or email it to whomever you believe would help to reach beyond the four walls of the church.



Understanding God's Arithmetic

³Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Luke 15:3-7 (New International Version)

Many people forget who Jesus was talking to in this scripture. Jesus was not addressing the lost. He was talking to the Pharisees and religious leaders. He was calling them out on the fact that they have forgotten their call to reach the lost vs. pasture the saved.

The Pharisees understood the shepherding reference. Shepherds were assigned 100 sheep by the owner. If one killed, they needed to bring back the body or be held accountable for the loss.

The same is true for churches. We have been assigned lost sheep in our communities. God wants us to leave our pastures and **GO GET THEM. WILL YOU GO OR NOT?**

1 > 99



There are no magic bullets!

People often look for a silver bullet that will make their church grow. They think a new website, a cool YouTube video or the perfect postcard will make people wake up on a Sunday morning and go "holy cow...I've been sleeping in for five years, but after seeing that video...I need to get to church now!"

I don't think so.

Most church marketing efforts are very misguided because they do not understand the people they are trying to reach. Churches talk about why people should come to church, with reasons church people understand, with a creative execution that looks cool to Christians already in the boat and speaks the right Christian catch phrases.

In other words...many churches create very self-centered marketing that contradict everything Christ taught us.

We need to start by focusing on others first. That's what Christ did...



Why do people hate the term “church marketing?”

Watching Twitter, Facebook, the blog-o-sphere and daily conversations, it is readily apparent that there are two camps when it comes to church marketing....those who believe it is essential and those who consider it blasphemous, heretical and downright sinful. They are concerned that the church is “prostituting the Gospel” and “cheapening Christ’s message.”

People are sick of being bombarded with advertising.

In 1998, 17,000 new grocery store products were introduced, \$1,000 worth of advertising was directed at you, you see over 3,000 marketing messages a day. It is all around us, constantly interrupting your day. The fragmentation of media has caused the tactics are getting more desperate pushed the envelope on good taste in the hopes of grabbing our attention.

This is what church leaders see and so they equate advertising and marketing. ***Nothing can be further from the truth.***

The difference between marketing and advertising.

Marketing is a discipline to "an **integrated process** through which companies **create value** for customers and **build strong customer relationships** in order to capture value from customers in return." In other words, it is about creating a mutually beneficial relationship between two parties.

Advertising is **just a subset** of the broader discipline of marketing. There are many. Public relations (managing your message in the press), promotion (using offers to entice behavior), event marketing, social media, e-mail marketing, and many others are all tactics designed to engage you and attempt to influence your behavior.

Many church "marketing" companies are nothing more than "tactics" machines. They offer customized postcards, a kitschy logo or pretty brochure. Don't get confused. **That isn't marketing. It's just a tactic.**



Would you ask someone to marry you on a first date?

No. But that is exactly what most churches try to do.

Some churches are like the "Christmas and Easter lounge lizards" that show up at the crowded night club, try out their "pick-up" line and then try to get the girl home for the night. Others may be less scary than a lounge lizard, but the approach is still the same..."**Hey, nice to meet you. Why don't you come over to my place?"**

Every new person that walks through your church doors is in crisis.

Going to a new place, with its own standards and rituals is a very scary thing to do. One church consultant I heard stated that "every new person that walks in through your door is in crisis." A person coming to a church for the first time is scared, usually in pain (missing something in their life, scared about raising a child for the first time, new to the community, had a problem at their own church, etc.) I think that is one reason mega-churches do well. You can slip in and out without being noticed and they have intentionally tried to make it comfortable for the "non-churched" person.

The marketing discipline is essential for every church. You need to think about how you engage someone not from your faith community and form a relationship with them from an initial introduction to final integration into the church community. It requires stepping out of your own shoes and placing yourself in another's mindset.

How are you going to take the fear, uncertainty and doubt away from visiting YOUR CHURCH and CONNECT THEM TO CHRIST? You need to place yourself in their shoes.



A Blueprint on How to Walk a Mile in Another's Shoes.

It isn't easy to clearly identify the target audience(s) that your church should focus on. It is critical that the church gets to know whom they are called to serve.

We need to know our communities interest, concerns, hopes, hurts and dreams. We need to know what music they like and how they learn. We must be willing to adapt our approach to “re-present” Christ’s unchanging message of love and grace.

We have a biblical mandate to be relevant. The first step is to walk a mile in our community’s shoes.



Step #1: Break out of the holy huddle and go where the people are. Most church marketing efforts are misguided because they focus on what appeals to people in the pews. Jesus spent 30 years understanding those outside the four walls of the church. Are you willing to spend 30 days?

Step #2: Listen in to the digital conversation. Take the time to LISTEN to the digital conversation going on around your community. You might just learn something about yourselves.

Step #3: Interact using social media to connect with your community. Avoid the “follower” trap. Look for opportunities for “quality conversations” to connect with people in your community. See people as people, not “targets.”

Step #4: Find data to support your observations and interactions. Look for demographic data to turn your observations and on-line interactions into a clear picture of whom you are trying to serve.

Step #5: Pull everything together into a set of personas. Personas are “stereotypes” to create a story that people can empathize with and see them as people, not “targets.” Personas can act as a filter for your efforts and help you determine if they make sense.

Step #6: Prioritize the personas and use them as filter for everything you do. Put yourself in the shoes of the persona. Now think through that next great idea. It will strengthen that next great idea into one that will be relevant to the people you are trying to serve.



Breaking out of the Holy Huddle...SKIP CHURCH!

Going back to Christ's example, we need to start by understanding who we are trying to serve. We need to "walk in their footsteps" and understand the world through their eyes. Like Christ's first 30 years of life...we need to get immersed in **THEIR WORLD** and **THEIR MINDSET**.

The simple way to get started is to "[skip church](#)" on Sunday morning and find where people are. You need to observe where people are, what they are doing and what they appear to care about. The simple act of observing and taking notes can lead to a breakthrough understanding of how to connect God into their daily lives.



People won't magically wake up one day and say "I need to go to church. We need to understand the "why's" behind the behavior.

1. Form a team to "skip church. Find people of different age groups, genders and experiences so you can get multiple perspectives on what you observe in your neighborhood. Remind your team that this is not a chance to sleep in, but to observe your community.

2. Develop a "note-taking guide." Like any good researcher, create a "field guide" to take notes. Ask simple questions like "where did you find groups of people?", "what were they doing?" etc. Write down any observable behaviors and your thoughts on why.

3. Take a camera or "flip camera." A picture is worth a thousand words. A video is worth a thousand pictures. Visually document your observations. Take pictures or videos of a mom in the grocery store struggling with her kids or a large group in the coffee shop.

4. Take as many notes as possible. It is very important that you capture as much detail as possible. Suspend your opinions, seek others point of view.

5. EXTRA CREDIT - Interview a few people (man on the street interviews.) Ask questions like, "what is your favorite thing to do Sunday AM?" Be honest about who you are (from a church) and that you want people's honest opinions. It takes some guts but is worth it.

6. Get the team back together and share what you learned. Allow everyone to share before jumping to conclusions. Ask clarifying questions like "what type of car was she driving? Was it new or old?" before trying to analyze the "whys" behind the behavior.



Listen In to the Digital Conversation

Now it's time to join the conversation by "dipping our little toe" into the social media "pool." So, how do you get started? The first step is to **listen** to what is already going on about you and the topics you care about.

Remember the two minute rule...

When I was a kid, my mom always impressed on me the importance of not "barging" into conversations. She always told me to listen to the conversation for two minutes and get an idea of what people are talking about before throwing in my two cents. I remember a few times when I thought I knew what people were talking about and ended up fairly embarrassed when I opened my "yap" before taking the time to listen.

The same applies to social media. We need to avoid screaming "look at me, look at me" when we first come into the space. People get all excited when they start to research social media, get up their blog, sign up for Twitter and Facebook, and then start screaming "PAY ATTENTION TO ME..."

While that may work for a baby in real life, it will get you ignored, blocked or flamed in social media.

Stop, Look and Listen Before Jumping into the Pool.

Take the time to LISTEN. You need to **spend 15 minutes each day listening** about your church, your target, and your community. Get informed about what is going on and how your church is seen and perceived by others in the digital world. There is a whole conversation going on about your community, faith and key issues that people face. It is only common courtesy to listen before jumping in.



A Step-by-Step to Guide to Digital Listening

Step #1: Set up listening posts. “Listening posts” are a general term for using different tools to search the internet and send pertinent information to you (ex. Using Google Alerts to track your church name and receive an e-mail every time it is mentioned.) Funnel all of the listening posts into one place (Google Reader, etc.) to monitor the results.

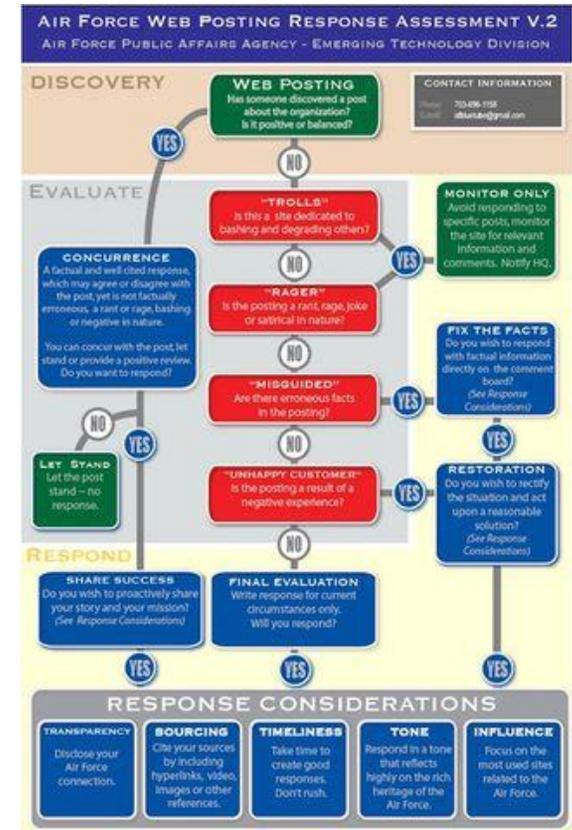
Step #2: Monitor what is going on. Use your central repository to read everything said about your church, your community and key areas of interest. Try to make this a DAILY activity to make sure you don’t fall too far behind or miss something that is time sensitive.

Step #3: Respond to 5 posts immediately. Most blogs and websites accept comments. Feel free to join the conversation. If they do not accept comments, post a blog article and reference the post you are responding to. It is important that your church start to take part in the conversation occurring on-line. This helps you “see and be seen” immediately (ex. Posting about a newspaper article discussing rising crime in your area.)

Now, it is easy to get very defensive about criticism about your organization. Be careful not to overreact. Some comments really do not deserve a response. Others need to be addressed to a broader audience but not the individuals themselves.

The U.S. Air Force has an [interesting blueprint](#) in how to response to comments about your organization in the social media space. Use it to assess the comments and reactions across many different social media sites and how to respond appropriately. Remember, not everything deserves a response.

Step #4: Identify key themes on a periodic basis. It may be regarding the church, the community, key news events, etc. Share the information with your leadership and work together to determine how to respond. This could help change your ministry priorities to address a need or become more relevant to your community.



Here is a simple rule to follow: **Read 15 posts, comment on 5, and write one.**



Interact with your community using social media.

While it is extremely helpful to spend time in your physical community, you need to spend time in the digital communities that your community "hangs out" in. This is likely places like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, but there may be others too. Use your listening strategy to guide where you go. Go where people congregate (just like you would a coffee house) and spend time observing them.

Start with the right attitude...it is NOT about YOU!

Many people make mistakes when they jump into social media. I have seen many companies try to "friend" me on [Facebook](#) or "follow" me on [Twitter](#) and then proceed to jam their brand message down my throat. I may have followed them initially because I was interested in their brand, product, message, but their disrespect for me (and my attention) will result in my "un-friending" them (at minimum) or my "un-evangelizing" them (at worst).

Many of these mistakes stem from a misunderstanding of social media. Many companies, churches and organizations attempt to use "social media" the same way they use "mass media." Get connected with a whole bunch of people and then keep bombarding them with your message until you wear down their resistance and they give in and do what you want.

Does this sound like something Jesus would do? Nope.

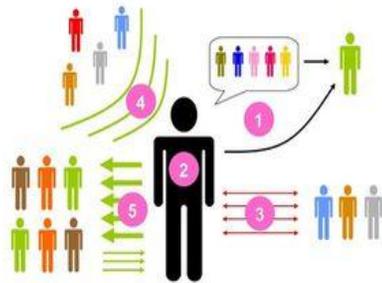
Focus on the quality of relationships, not the quantity

A major mistake people make is that they get caught up in the numbers instead of focusing on the quality of the relationship. I fundamentally believe that Jesus would be on Twitter, Facebook and Foursquare (at a minimum) if he was starting his ministry today. Why? Because it allows a 1:1 connection independent of geography, while others can still see, listen and learn from what is going on.

Jesus made very personal connections with people. The healing of the woman who was bleeding for 12 years ([Matthew 9:20-22](#)); the discussion with the Samaritan women at the well ([John 4](#)); and others show 1:1 connections while demonstrating grace and love.

Jesus was always focused on the one over the many. So should we.

5 Ways to Cultivate an Active Social Network



Source: Cultivate an Active Network (Chris Brogan)

- 1 **BE HELPFUL** - offer your network advice or suggest people that can help
- 2 **BE PRESENT** - participate and contribute
- 3 **BE SOCIAL** - engage with as many people as possible...not to be confused with just pushing out messages to a list.
- 4 **SHARE THE LOVE** - make it about them...talk about your network
- 5 **PAY IT FORWARD** - build equity by contributing to your network before asking for anything in return...and never take out more than you put in.

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A lesson from Boeing and a child's airplane.



[An article in the New York Times](#) came out in May 2010 outlining the lesson an 8-year old boy taught Boeing aircraft in how to listen to their consumers. Harry Winson, an 8-year old boy from Boulder, Colorado, loves airplanes and sent a picture of one of his designs to Boeing for them to consider manufacturing.

What Harry wanted from Boeing was a person connection. What Harry received from Boeing was [a form letter](#).

The gist on the letter is: *We receive lots of ideas every year from people, but we cannot accept unsolicited ideas, since we usually have already thought about it and don't want to risk having an Intellectual Property dispute later.* **(Eric's paraphrase)**

So, Harry's father, who owns an ad agency, tossed the situation out on his blog. Does he tell his son that Boeing crushed his creativity or do you let him live under the delusion that Boeing accepted his idea?

The conversation began to gain traction in the social media space, with many people soundly criticizing Boeing for not "embracing people, for well, people" as one wrote.

Luckily, Boeing started up on Twitter a few weeks prior, engaged the community in the conversation, and started to discuss how Boeing can protect its intellectual property yet engage kids in a way that encourages their creativity and interest in engineering.

Boeing's best comment, *"We're experts at airplanes but novices in social media. We are learning as we go."*

People's opinions turned on a dime since Boeing engaged in conversation. People started thanking Boeing and calling them "cool" for talking to them. The Future of Flight Museum contacted Harry about a kid's drawing contest. Boeing also called Harry to thank him for his drawing and changed how they respond to children's submissions.

In other words...a faceless company found their voice, engaged a group of critics and turned them into raving fans.



People want to be treated like people on-line or off.

At the core of the Boeing story (and many others) is that people want to be seen as people. They want to know that their opinion matters, that they are significant and that people care about who they are and what they say (especially in the social media context.)



Avoid the SPAM!

Jesus hung out with the people in his community wherever they were at. He invested himself to get to know them? Are we willing to do the same?

Take some time to see what many teens post as status updates on Facebook. Many of the updates want people affirm them or cheer them up. **(READ: Social acceptance)**. A little empathetic listening (or in this case reading) can go a long way.

You can also spend some time looking for "highly engaged groups" that are already talking about topics that relate to you. This may be talking about spirituality, being good parents, finances, or trying to eliminate hunger in a community. The trick is to find something relevant to your church and connect into the conversation.

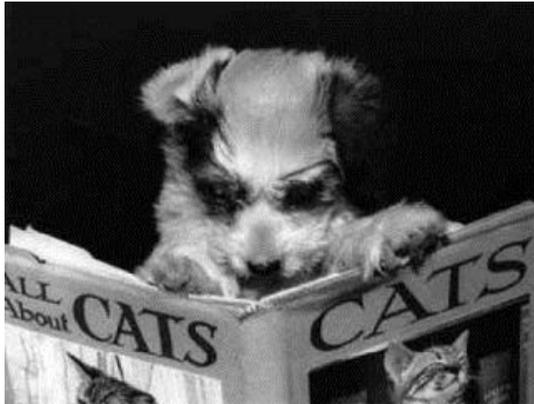
1. **Get a face.** Establish "real people" accounts vs. a monolithic corporate account to provide a face to the organization. While [Southwest Airlines](#) has a "corporate twitter account," they show who it is hosted by and their "twitter handles" as well. The updates are personable and friendly and they directly interact with people who "talk to them."
2. **Get connected.** Start connecting with people talking about areas that connect with the church. Don't be in a rush to follow 1,000 people, but take time to build relationships over time.
3. **Treat people like people.** You maybe the face of the church, but you aren't a building. Let your own personality come through. Talk about your own life (within reason). Yes...you represent the church, but you aren't the institution. People want to know the people behind the logo.

4. **Avoid social spam.** Spam is a wonderful meat product (at least I like it) but it can kill your social media efforts. Yes, it is OK to use social media to publicize your events and blog articles, but not at the expense of your relationships.

5. **It's a marathon, not a sprint.** Building relationships takes time. Invest enough time to create a real relationship and not a "passing" acquaintance. Find the people who are truly engaged and spend your time there.



Desperately seeking data...confirm observations with facts.



As human beings, we tend to view things from our own personal frame of reference. While it is important to use judgment and experiences, we need to take the time understand every aspect of our community before we try to market to it.

Demographic data allows us to go beyond our assumptions and enter the realm of facts. We may learn things that surprise us. For example, I have heard churches say “people my age don’t use a computer or aren’t on Facebook.”

These are just assumptions. Checking the facts shows that 76.3% of people in the U.S. are on-line and 58.7% of people on-line are on Facebook. Between 2009 and 2010, the fastest growing age group on Facebook was those between the ages of 25 and 54 (growing 923%.) “Women 55+” grew 550% over the past six months. **Facts help us check our biases at the door.**

Looking for data in all the right places (at least in the United States)

Use U.S. Census data. Go to the U.S. Government [census site](#) to start. The [Factfinder site](#) provides basic demographic information based on zip code. The U.S. Census Bureau also provides [a host of additional tools](#) including a [link](#) to religious sites.

Real Estate Information. One new source of information is [Zillow](#). It compiles real estate and demographic information. Type in the name of your local city or zip code and then hover over the "local info" tab for data on house prices, demographics, etc.)

School District Records. Many states have school district report cards. In Ohio, we can go to the [Department of Education site](#) and search school districts information. Here is an example for [the school district where we used to live](#).

Try a Google search. Google can be a wonderful thing. It can help find all sorts of different data that you can help piece together a view of the community. Start by searching "+community + state demographics" and look through the links.

Pay for data. There are also places to get unique data for your church. The many church organizations subscribe to [Percept Group's Link2Lead](#) or [MissionInsite](#) to obtain data tailored to churches. It analyzes specific factors and attitudes towards religion and life.

Find what data is available is based on your location, dig deep and look for themes...



Time to Pass the Test...Turn your homework into Personas.



Whether it is the [Toyota "swagger-wagon"](#) or the best church marketing in the world, they both have one thing in common: **a clear understanding of their target audience.** Whether we look at Jesus' ministry to the "least, last and lost" of the Jewish people or Paul's focus on the Gentiles, both ministries focused on creating a connection between a clear and distinct target audience and a loving God.

Did you do your homework? Or are you just reading this e-book?

You need to do your homework. There are no short-cuts or easy ways out. You should have skipped church, set up an on-line listening strategy, interacted via social media and conducted demographic research.

If you haven't done the work, STOP! Go back and **DO IT** so you can reap the benefits.

Compile your observations, interactions and data

It is all about connecting WHAT THEY NEED with HOW YOUR CHURCH MEETS THAT NEED. You need to bring together all of the information you have and start to organize it in a way that people can use.

Spend time sharing what you found out. Have each person share their physical observations, on-line listening and social interactions. Ask clarifying questions. Seek to understand before trying to jump to the answer.

Look for themes. What are the themes you see? How can you support your findings with data? Do you see lots of kids around? Do you think you have a working class neighborhood? Prove it with all the data you have collected.

Combine your data into different groups that may exist in your community. Write down all of the information you on separate post-it notes. Then, group the post-it notes into the different groups. If a data point or observation applies to more than one group, then make a copy of it and place it with the second group.

Organize your findings in potential groups. Next we can turn them into personas...



Bringing your audience to life with personas.

One technique that I support in a BIG WAY is the use of personas. Personas represent a "stereotype" of a particular group. Use the data that you have compiled to imagine a person who represents that group. Describe them in detail. Where do they live? What do they do for a living? Who lives in their household? What is their education? What are their goals and ambitions? Why would they be interested in your church?



Many people heard about the idea of “Saddleback Sam and Samantha” from Rick Warren’s book, “The Purpose Driven Church.”

Saddleback Sam is the typical unchurched man who lives in our area. His age is late thirties or early forties. He has a college degree and may have an advanced degree...He is married to Saddleback Samantha, and they have two kids, Steve and Sally.

Surveys show that Sam likes his job, he likes where he lives, and he thinks he's enjoying life more now than he was five years ago. He's self-satisfied, even smug, about his station in life. He's either a professional, a manager, or a successful entrepreneur.

...Another important characteristic of Sam is that he's skeptical of what he calls "organized" religion. He's likely to say, "I believe in Jesus. I just don't like organized religion."

This persona created by Rick Warren helped the church focus on a clear picture of who they serve and what they are most interested in. Saddleback used this clear description to think how “Sam” would interact with the church and what would interest his family.

The same technique can be used to help your church get crystal clear on whom you are trying to reach. Too many church efforts fall flat because they are trying to target everyone. Instead, create personas for your key segments. Use them as a filter for determining your programming, assessing your programs, or even evaluating how welcoming your church may be.

Most importantly, personas keep the focus off us and on the people God wants us to reach.

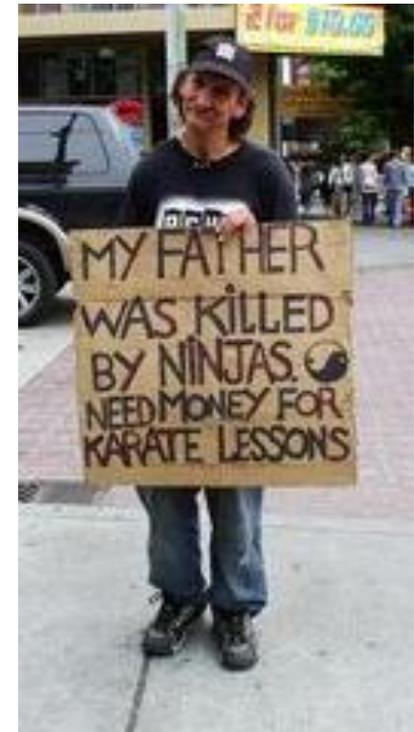


How to create your own personas...

Many agencies and brands create a live size poster to represent the person they are trying to reach. They create an interesting story which tells a "day in the life" of their target so they can better understand them. Personas are designed to allow you to "walk in another's shoes" and be able to see the world through their point of view.

Look at the picture of the pan-handler. Is there a high concentration of homeless people around your church? Why are they homeless? Do they have access to social services? Does this man need to be "more clever" since there is strong competition for "charity." What are the drivers and motivations of this person? What is his story?

A persona turns a pile of information and statistics into a story that people can empathize with. It allows us to set our own biases aside, so we can see people as, well, people. Isn't that how God sees us?



How do I get started?

- Sort your information into different "groups" (pictures, data, observations, etc.)
- Brainstorm all of the ways your church can connect with the specific group.
- Assess how relevant and effective these efforts will be to reach, connect, and communicate with the target group.
- Prioritize the groups based on your ability to effectively reach them.
- Fill out the persona templates with the information you have.
- Attempt to write a story reflecting the persona, key questions, goals and values.
- Refine your efforts as you learn and interact with the persona

For access to the persona template, go to:
www.flockology.com/personas

Photo

Name Lastname

"Quote or highlight statement here to be able to provide a snapshot of the individual and their needs."

Background

Personal Profile

Location: _____
 Profession: _____
 Income: _____
 Age: _____
 Home Life: _____
 Interests/Hobbies: _____
 Personality: _____

Survival Needs

Finances _____
 Time _____
 Family _____
 Relationships _____
 Career _____
 Social _____
 Church _____

Focus or Priority

Attitudes & Focus

Attitudes _____
 Focus _____

Technology & Media

Internet Usage _____
 Mobile Usage _____
 Social Media _____
 Media Consumption & Usage _____

Key Questions about Spirituality, God, Religion & Church

- Question #1
- Question #2
- Question #3

Goals

- Goal or Focus #1
- Goal or Focus #2
- Goal or Focus #3

Values

- Value #1
- Value #2
- Value #3

Unmet Needs/Gaps in Life

- Issue #1
- Issue #2
- Issue #3



The Story of “Jane Silently-Struggling”- A Sample Persona

For example, think about the mom with the kids at the grocery store that you observed while “skipping church.” Take what you observed (her interactions with the kids, the car she drove, what was in the cart, etc.) and start to flesh it out into a story. Start thinking about the type of person and gather information through your interactions and research.

Write a story about your person.

Use empathy and multiple observations to try to bring it together into a plausible story. Avoid value judgments or trying to assume too much. Make sure it is a plausible story for your neighborhood. Use the pictures you took to provide additional context and clarity.

Gaps in the story...fill ‘em with more research and observation.

Your first attempt will have a lot of information gaps and holes. Use your story as a starting point and look for more information to prove or disprove your theory.

Find similar people in your church and interview.

There may be people who are similar to your persona. Look for “newer” people in your church (especially new to the faith) and ask for them to help you gain a deeper understanding of their thoughts, values, attitudes and stories. Why did they come to church and why do they stay?



Jane Silently-Struggling

“I’m trying to make things as normal as I can for my children, but I am struggling to balance all of the demands in my life.”

Personal Profile

Jane is a divorced mother of two that lives in the Findlay area. She divorced about a year ago and is struggling with the transition to being a single mom with children ages 7 and 13. Neither are adjusting to the change very well. Her 7 year old daughter is always asking when “Daddy will be coming home” while her 13-year old son knew that things were a little rough, but wondered why “they couldn’t work it out.” She is struggling to balance working as a para-legal, managing her kids schedule and balancing everything at home.

Jane carries a lot of anger about the divorce. It was caused by her husbands alcohol and gambling issues that arose after he lost his long-time job at Cooper Tire Company. Even though he found other employment, he slid into depression, drinking and later lost a significant amount of money playing poker on-line while using credit cards in her name.

She is angry with her situation both her ex-husband and with God. She grew up in the church, but stopped going when she left home. She wonders why this is happening to her.

Jane is determined to “press-on” for her kids and provide as “normal.” She is struggling to pay off the debt her ex-husband left her with, maintain their house as best she can and keep everything going. When asked how she is doing, she says that she is “fine” and moves on.

Key Questions about Spirituality, God, Religion & Church

- I am not sure if I believe in God or not. I grew up in the church, but how do I know what they taught is true?
- I’ve been a good person. Why is this happening to me? If there is a God, is this fair?
- Why do they always ask where my husband is when I go to church? I felt awkward when I tried to go after the divorce so I gave it up.

Goals	Values	Unmet Needs/Gaps in Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing for her children. • Stay out of bankruptcy and pay off the debt. • Balance everything as best as she can on her own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids come first. • Providing an outward sense of normalcy. • Responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Stability • Friendship (too busy) • Getting some “Me-time” so she can catch her breath.

Location: Findlay, Ohio

Profession: Para-legal

Income: \$38,000

Age: mid-30s

Home Life: Divorced with 2 kids (7 and 13)

Interests/Hobbies: Biking at Hancock Park, Cooking

Personality: Rational, organized, thoughtful

Survival Needs

Finances

Time

Family

Relationships

Career

God

Church

(Scale: Not at All, Not Very, Somewhat, Very, Extremely)

Focus of Priority

Internet Usage	Internet Usage	Mobile Usage
<input type="checkbox"/> Home (Dial Up) <input type="checkbox"/> Home (High Speed) <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile <input type="checkbox"/> Public Access (Library, Web Cafe, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Constantly <input type="checkbox"/> Daily <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly <input type="checkbox"/> What's e-mail?	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Text messaging <input type="checkbox"/> Smartphone? <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Location-based services
Social Media	Media Consumption & Usage	
<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> MySpace <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> FourSquare <input type="checkbox"/> Gowalla <input type="checkbox"/> Blogging <input type="checkbox"/> Others	TV Shows: Bones, Food Network Shows Radio Stations: Findlay's Mr. 96.7 (WBV) Print/Newspaper: Cooking magazines Music: Adult Contemporary, Some Country Movies: Julie & Me, The Step Traveler's Wife Books: Cooking books, Angels & Demons Web Pages: Facebook, Cooking Websites Mobile Apps: None	

**You’ll never have all the information you need to make it “perfect.”
Make educated guesses to make it useful enough and run with it.**

www.flockology.com

Connecting with Your Community: Why God believes 1 > 99.

Eric Seiberling

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Using Personas to Incubate Your Ideas

A few months ago, I found a great article on [Shrink the Church](#) by Paul Hickernell [comparing an idea to an egg](#). He believes we need to nurture the idea to allow it to hatch. We need to incubate our ideas to be effective in reaching the lost.

1. **Identify the need.** Use the personas that you have developed to clearly know who we are trying to "serve" with your idea. Use it as a "compass" to articulate why an idea, program or marketing effort is relevant and meaningful to them? Start with a list of programs or ideas, bucket them by needs and then determine how well they meet that need.

2. **What are the sources of frustration?** What is the primary driver of dissatisfaction or need in their life? Does this idea address it? If not, why should they pay attention to your idea? Get very clear on why the status quo is not acceptable. This can help you understand the key success criteria for the idea, project or initiative.

3. **What are you trying to do?** Break down what you are trying to do into its component parts. If it is fundraising, it would be...**identify** (who would want to give), **know** (how do we meet), **like** (how do we see we are aligned in our goals), **trust** (can I trust you with my money), **give** (exchange \$\$\$), and **reward** (tangibles/intangibles received.) How can you improve it?

4. **Look for parallels.** What are similar experiences or examples you can learn from? NPR? The Red Cross? What about the individual components? Ex. Amazon (for \$\$\$ transactions). How can I learn from others to short-cut my "development" time?

5. **Recompile.** How can we create an experience unique for our goals, but learn from others? How can I create a relevant program that meets the need of my personas?

6. **Allow time to incubate.** Set it aside and take another look at it in a week. Allow others to play with the idea. Give the idea time to incubate and see if it can "hatch."

It all comes back to an egg. Focus on the audience & their needs (the yolk). Build an experience around it (the whites). Create a creative package to bring it together (the shell).



An Example of Incubating Your Ideas

A few months ago, I found a great article on [Shrink the Church](#) by Paul Hickernell [comparing an idea to an egg](#). He believes we need to nurture the idea to allow it to hatch. We need to incubate our ideas to be effective in reaching the lost.

Goals & values	Unmet Needs/ Frustrations	Program Ideas	Connection Touchpoints	Next Steps
<p>Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing for her children. • Stay out of bankruptcy and pay off the debt. • Balance everything as best as she can on her own. <p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids come first. • Providing an outward sense of normalcy. • Responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Stability • Friendship (too busy) • Getting some “Me-time” so she can catch her breath. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Planning Program (Dave Ramsey or Crown Financial Ministries) (new) • Youth Group and Youth Targeted Events. (existing) • Children’s Program (existing) • DivorceCare and Support Groups (new) • Family Cooking Classes • Tutoring program for children. • Group biking program at Hancock Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook (groups or direct friend connections) • Church Website • Mix 96.7 Community Calendar Announcements • Movie Theater Advertising • Church Signage • Word-of-Mouth invitations through Jane’s friends or children’s friends. • Out-of-Home Signage at Hancock Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •



Jesus immersed himself with his target audience for 30 years.

Can you do it for 30 days?

Are you willing to observe and interact with your community for 30 days? You may have to “skip church?” You may need to learn new technology you are not comfortable with. You may need to learn how to write personas so you can share what you have learned with your congregation.

Here are some final questions:

- **Are you willing to understand others?**
- **Are you willing to learn their language and customs?**
- **Are you willing to adapt your practices (NOT God's core message) to be relevant enough to engage them?**

Are you willing to take the risk?

It might change how you see your community. It might change how you see yourself.

If you truly seek to understand why people don't make the effort to come to church on Sunday AM, and are willing to get up at 6am to meet their jogging group to run 10 miles and then eat breakfast, you may be able to figure out how and when you can "re-present" God's unchanging message in a relevant and meaningful way.

We can also take a good, long, hard look in the mirror and ask ourselves, “Are we living as Christ called us? What would need to change to live more fully in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission?” This process allows us to reflect on how we “re-present” Christ to our community. It shows where we are living up to Christ’s example and where we need to improve. It helps see how the church has abandoned many “sheep” and like the Pharisees, Jesus is calling us to account.

**Will you go get Christ’s lost sheep or
are you too comfortable with the ones in the pasture?**





This is pretty wild, powerful stuff... Handle with care. Be willing to ask for help.

Don't hesitate to reach out to me at www.flockology.com or e-mail me at seiberling.ea@gmail.com to ask for help, share some thoughts, scream at me for being a heretic or just chat.

It can be a lonely when you are trying new things and I am here to support, encourage and pray for you to ask the tough questions, try new stuff, maybe tilt some windmills and definitely have some "sacred cow steaks" on the grill.

Whatever you do, **follow me on Twitter at [@eseiberling](https://twitter.com/eseiberling)** so you can see new e-books coming out (I have 4 more planned or in the works) and keep entertained with my rants against the status quo.

Who is this guy anyway? Why should I even listen to him?

Eric Seiberling has been causing trouble in churches since he gave his life to Christ at age 20. Eric is an innovator, strategist, marketing guy and computer geek that has worked with many Fortune 200, government and non-profit organizations to radically change their business models and results for over 17 years.

Eric serves on the United Methodist General Commission on Communications, is Chair of the Communications Team for the West Ohio Conference, and works with his wife, Pastor Kim Pope-Seiberling to grow churches and make change one person, one church and one community at a time.

Read his blog at www.flockology.com or e-mail him at seiberling.ea@gmail.com

