

The Effect of Social Media on Church Management

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Abstract

This paper surveys the implication of the use of the social media in contemporary times on the church and items. The way of doing mission work in the time past cannot be applied in this ever-changing world. The world becoming a global village calls for shift in the way and methods of communicating and managing people. All organizations need to employ new methods of reaching out to people in a more smart and quick way.

The church as a spiritual entity needs to employ key means of reaching out to its people as well as others who might come into contact with them. Social media is undoubtedly an effective means of reaching out to church members as well as managing them and the world in its entirety. The social media can be used to do many things ranging from winning souls to fundraising. It is against this background that this paper looks the implications of social media on church management.

The effect of social media on church management

There is no doubt that social media has gained wider acceptability and usability and it is also becoming probably the most important communication tools among people across all levels of life. The Church can be simply explained as a particular Christian denomination or group of Christian believers.

The great commission of spreading the gospel in Jesus' time was carried out through word of mouth. This was achieved through the gathering of people who were desperately in need of the salvation and the delivery of sermons by Jesus himself or the disciples. Years after the departure of Jesus management of such churches were done through the writing of letters by the disciples and the apostles. Some of this letter could not get to their intended destination as well as some being delayed. In recent times a lot of methods have been tried and tested in reaching out to new souls and well as effectively managed those save already.

The social media is one of such key tools employed in this modern world. The proliferation of different social media tools has their rippling effect on religion especially the church. Different schools of thought had considered the pros and cons of social media on the Church.

Social media is a term used to describe a variety of web-based platforms, applications and technologies that enable people to socially interact with each other online. Some examples of Social Media Websites (SMW) and applications include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Del.icio.us, Google+, Digg, Blogs, 2go, Watsapp and other sites that have content based on user participation and User-Generated Content (UGC).

One key thing that keeps the various yarns of societal fabric together is communication. It is therefore important that all institutions including the church management identifies various means within which the church can be kept closer to its members. This is the reason why the effect of social media and church management would have to be looked at critically.

In other to know the effect of social media on the church, it is necessary to make certain the level of church awareness of social media websites, computer literacy of members, and policy on social media, primary purpose of each member on the social media website, time spent on social media websites and so on. These are performance indices to evaluate the effect of social media on the church. It is not sufficient to conclude whether the effect on the church is positive or negative.

Some key effects of social media include but not limited to the under discussed. Churches use social media as a tool for communicating with existing members. Churches are no longer restricted to a street address or a couple of service times each week. Instead, members or potential members can access sermons, listen to podcasts, connect with other church members, view photos from the most

recent church event, regardless of where they are or the time of day. This helps to limit the gap between the chapel and the members.

In addition, churches can use the social media to plan and deliver service geared towards the aged and all those who unable to leave the house. This keeps them active and the specially created messages targeted towards them revives the hope that they have not been neglected in the ‘evening of their life’.

Currently, most churches have devised ways to keeping in constant contact with members. One of such means adopted by most of the churches in the publishing and distribution of weekly, monthly or yearly bulletins among others. In recent times one can easily asked how effective this method is. Some of the information intended to be communicated may get to the targeted audience. The most effective way of pushing prayer meetings, request, upcoming programmes among other important information intended for a particular audience is the use of the social media. That is the use of social media makes the availability of information more quickly and prompt than any other means. This also helps to cut down cost since printing of the bulletins is expensive as well as time consuming.

Another point underlying and compelling churches to use social media is accomplishing more with fewer resources. Above and beyond communicating event-oriented content, churches can also use social media to get their message out and, in some cases, encourage open dialog. This is accomplished through a variety of methods including tweeting a daily message, Bible verse, broadcasting regularly scheduled podcasts, uploading videos of sermons or other spiritual teachings, sharing blogs written by the minister or other church leaders, updates on conferences, fundraising for projects in addition all important activities.

Churches, like other nonprofits institutions are finding social media a doable tool for raising funds to finance projects. This is achieved through providing easy ways to donate, repurposing presentations and many other more. Churches are able to put across their projects and use social media as a tool to seek financial support to help accomplish such projects. Members and nonmembers alike are able to make their financial contribution in the form of donations, tithes, offerings and other forms. This helps to raise more than enough funds to help sustain the life and activities of the church.

An additional viable arm of social media for churches is the potential of reaching new members. Salvation messages among other things can lead to wining more people into their fold. Churches use the social media to reach out the unsaved and those who need to rededicate their lives. People who access such messages and are touched by them are followed up on with pastoral letters, daily devotional messages, inspirational messages to reassure them of God’s continual presence and guidance. All these through the social media such as Facebook, tweeter, YouTube help to win more souls and thereby adding up to the membership.

Blogs can also be a great source of information for a Christian and can give them access to some of the great thinkers of the church in current times. Christians can easily feed themselves on another pastor’s blog at any period and on regular basis.

Social media can bring ministry groups, study groups, and those with like interests together for discussion, debate and events. Sometimes a group can’t meet face-to-face but could connect via a social networking site.

Notwithstanding the above benefits that churches stand to profit if social media is looked at well as an improvement and growth tool in church management, there some negative effects as well on church management.

One of the major problems of social media is that face to face connections are endangered. They reduce or eliminate face-to-face socialization. Because of the autonomy afforded by the virtual world, individuals are free to create a fantasy persona and can pretend to be someone else. Such pretense is against the rule of the church. It is hard to say no, be rude, or ignore someone when you are looking at them in the eye. It is incredibly easy and quick to ‘unfriend’ or ‘unfollow’ someone or simply block their efforts to make a connection. Unfortunately, this feature of online socialization cheats people of the opportunity to learn how to resolve conflicts in the world outside the Internet and it could retard or cripple one's social skills developments.

Use of social networks can expose the church members to harassment or inappropriate

contact from others. Unless the church leaders are diligent to filter the Internet content to which the members are exposed, they could be exposed to pornography or other inappropriate content. High usage of social media increases the risk of their being victims of cybercrimes.

Conclusion

The issue of social media and its effect on the church management and growth cannot be swept under the carpet. The magnitude of social can be used to reach out to the entire world. It is interesting to know that some years ago Facebook had over 900million users, 500million users of Twitter, over 200million blog sites, over 5 million images uploaded daily, among other important social media handles.

All these lead to the very understandable deduction that there has been a seismic shift in the way we interconnect and that we are now very much wired connected community. Social media if well embraced will not only help reach out the masses but also help build the spiritually sound people as we as manage them. This is made possible through people contributing to their understanding of God by asking questions and having satisfactory answers promptly, communicate effectively about events, provision of pastoral care and accountability, provision of leadership modelling on how to do life in Christ well, communicating the salvation plan of |God to all, helping connecting people to churches, giving a sense of belonging to a community of believers among many other key importance of social media and how it can impact on the management of a church.

Churches that employ the various advantages of the use of social media should not be fascinated by the enormous benefit it brings but care must be taken as any negligence on its disadvantages can undermine the mission and vision purpose of such churches.

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