

The Resource Guide for Churches

# THE CHURCH PLANTER'S GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA



A resource provided by



[CAUSELY.COM/REACH](https://causely.com/reach)

We don't know if you've noticed, but traditional advertising no longer works. TV and radio ads are useless, and print advertising is costly and less effective every day. The shift has been subtle. But during the last decade traditional advertising died, and modern, digital advertising took over.

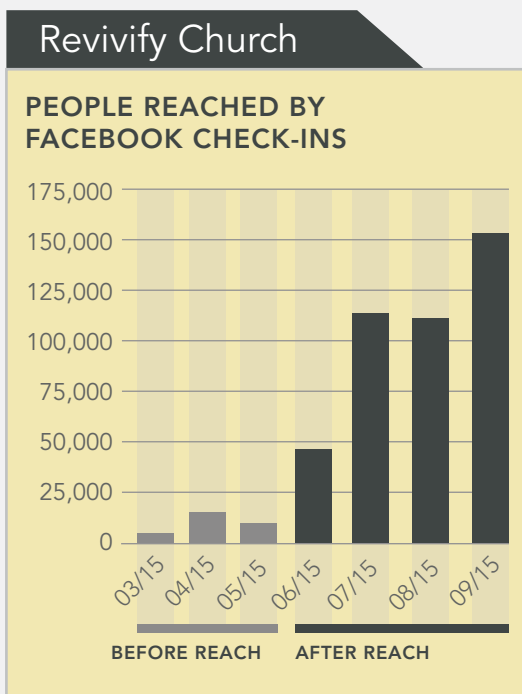
This new type of advertising meets people where they are – on the Internet – and allows them to consume only what they want, when they want it. The backbone of digital advertising is social media. Beyond being a place to see pictures of our friends, it's a powerful tool to connect with large groups of people. Social media has the power to take a single idea and ignite it so that it becomes viral. And unlike old forms of advertising, it can be inexpensive to use.

According to recent studies, people in the U.S. check their social media accounts 17 times a day, or more than once an hour.<sup>1</sup> That means our social media activities make up about 28% of our average daily online time.<sup>2</sup> Every age group, from the Baby Boomers to the Generation Z kids, uses social media to learn about products and services.

So naturally, social media is a great tool to help you grow your church community. When our friends at Revivify Church ramped up their Facebook strategy with Reach, they grew their monthly exposure impressions on Facebook from 11,000 to 124,000. That means 124,000 people in their community see the name and address of Revivify Church in their Facebook news feed each month. Not surprisingly, the Revivify Church community is growing at a very fast rate because of it.

But the key to tapping into the vast potential of social media is knowing how to use it effectively. Each of the networks works differently, and navigating them is sometimes confusing. Adding to that is the fact that the networks change their features and user abilities often. That's why we created this social media guide. It's full of the latest tips and tricks to help you bring more people to your community and the love of God.

We start this guide by comparing the network's outreach tools. Then we move on to tips and tricks to help you make the most of the social networks. We've chosen to focus on the big three networks here. There are some newer networks that might end up being great resources, but Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are proven tools for building church communities.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/informate-report-social-media-smartphone-use/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/informate-report-social-media-smartphone-use/>

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# AUDIENCE AND USER DEMOGRAPHICS



To start, let's look at the user demographics for the three social networks. As we mentioned, they constantly evolve. A network that was once popular with a particular group can fall out of favor. But the big three networks we're highlighting are the most stable and consistently have the biggest number of users.



## Facebook

Facebook is the network that needs no introduction. Since its launch in 2004, it's grown to be the biggest and most used social network by far. It's estimated that 71% of online US adults regularly use Facebook, or 1.49 billion people monthly.<sup>3</sup> These users are between 25 and 34 years of age, with a rapidly growing segment of users 65 years and older.<sup>4</sup>



## Instagram

Instagram is a social networking app used for sharing photos and videos with a smartphone. As with Facebook, users establish accounts and see a running news feed made up of posted images and videos from others users.

This network has over 300M active users, or roughly 23% of online US adults.<sup>5</sup> The typical Instagram user is between the ages of 18 to 30, and over half of all young adults have an Instagram account.<sup>6</sup>



## Twitter

Twitter is a social network that facilitates the sharing of information through real-time posts. These posts are that are limited to 140 characters or less. Twitter is a popular place to go to see breaking news, sometimes even before it's reported by the major news networks.

Twitter currently has 304 million monthly active users, or about 23% of online US adults.<sup>7</sup> The network is especially popular with college-educated people under 50.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.digitalinformationworld.com/2015/02/fascinating-social-networking-stats-2015.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/demographics-of-key-social-networking-platforms-2/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://marketingland.com/survey-says-teens-fleeing-facebook-103174>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>

## OVERALL AUDIENCE GRADE:

Because Facebook has the largest and most diverse user base, it's clearly the leader in terms of the audience you can connect with. Instagram comes in second because their user base grew much faster than Twitter's, and all indications are that it will continue to grow as quickly.

Facebook: A

Instagram: B+

Twitter: B

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# POST REACH



When you post updates or videos, you want your fans and followers to see them. But each of the social networks displays posts and videos differently. In this section, we'll run through the differences so you will know what to expect.



## Facebook

The sheer volume of users and posts means Facebook has to filter posts so newsfeeds are manageable and enjoyable. With the filtering process, Facebook's goal is to serve up more of the posts users want to see, and fewer of those they don't.

To accomplish that, Facebook uses a complex algorithm to determine which posts appear in your follower's news feed. Over the last couple years, the algorithm has grown more and more strict. Now, only a small number of a page's posts are seen organically.<sup>9</sup>

To get around Facebook's restrictive algorithm, pages can pay to "boost" their posts for more visibility, or reach. Boosting posts is easy and inexpensive. You can choose to target people who don't already follow you, as well as people in a specific age range or area. As you can imagine, this is great for exposure and outreach. It allows you to get your message in front of an audience you might not otherwise have access to.



## Instagram

Instagram is a good network for organic visibility. All posts are displayed in chronological order, without an algorithm to control what followers see. The only time this becomes a problem is if a user follows a lot of pages that post heavily. When that happens, posts can be hard to see or find.

Instagram does offer advertising on the network, but it's currently cost prohibitive unless you're a large corporation.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://contently.com/strategist/2015/04/23/what-facebooks-algorithm-change-means-for-brands-publishers-and-the-future-of-media/>

THERE IS NO BETTER ARGUMENT  
FOR CHRISTIANITY THAN A LIFE LIVED WITH  
joy, grace, humility,



## Twitter

Twitter posts are called “tweets.” When you tweet, your message appears in your follower’s timelines in chronological order. That’s the good news.

The bad news is that Twitter is a network for real-time posts, or things happening right now. Users frequently post, sometimes back-to-back, and Twitter sees an estimated 500 million tweets daily.<sup>10</sup> All this tweeting means posts are buried in news feeds fast. Industry experts studied the rate at which a tweet drops from newsfeeds and determined it’s about 18 minutes after being posted.<sup>11</sup>

Twitter does offer paid tweet promotion and ads with targeting, and the fee is based on user engagement.<sup>12</sup> The only downside is that the targeting options are not as comprehensive as they are on Facebook.

### OVERALL POST REACH GRADE:

Facebook takes the top spot for post reach too. Although you need to boost your posts to get an ideal amount of exposure, it can be inexpensive if done right. Plus the targeting options are fantastic, so you reach the specific group of people you’re trying to connect with. But we have one word of warning here. Spending money to boost Facebook posts doesn’t guarantee results. It only works if you are strategic with your targeting and willing to test to see where you’re getting the best results.

Facebook: A

Instagram: A-

Twitter: B

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.buzzfeed.com/alexkantrowitz/an-algorithmic-feed-may-be-twitters-last-remaining-card-to-p#.wkQlqdGmW>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.weidert.com/whole\\_brain\\_marketing\\_blog/bid/206554/are-you-maximizing-the-shelf-life-of-your-social-media](http://www.weidert.com/whole_brain_marketing_blog/bid/206554/are-you-maximizing-the-shelf-life-of-your-social-media)

<sup>12</sup> <https://business.twitter.com/solutions/grow-followers>



# CHECK-INS



Check-ins are a great way to spread the word about your church. They are casual and serve as a soft-invite for social media connections. This no-pressure way of sharing excitement for a church community results in easy conversations and new church visitors.



## Facebook

With a click of a button, Facebook users can share all the key information about a church with their friends. The address and map to the church are pre-populated with each check-in. Posters can write a fun or inspirational comment with their check-ins, which makes them all the more authentic and engaging.



## Instagram

Instagram also allows check-ins, but the process is more challenging than it is with Facebook. The user has to post an image, prepare a caption, and then tag the location. Unlike with a Facebook check-in, only the church name appears in the post. There isn't an option to show the address and map to the church.



## Twitter

It's much harder to check-in for outreach on Twitter than it is on Facebook or Instagram. Check-ins are often limited to a city and state. On this topic, Twitter says:

"In select locations you may also label your Tweet with the name of a specific business, landmark, or another point of interest. These locations are provided by Foursquare."<sup>13</sup>

## OVERALL CHECK-IN GRADE:

Facebook comes out as the winner of this comparison too. Their check-in feature is superior for creating awareness in news feeds. Instagram is the next best choice for check-ins.

Facebook: A

Instagram: B

Twitter: D

<sup>13</sup> <https://support.twitter.com/articles/122236>

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# LINKS



Links are a great way to drive traffic back to your website and worship schedule. If a user comes across your posts and likes them, chances are they will use your website link to learn more about you.



## Facebook

Facebook does a good job of allowing pages to use links. You can post them in your profile, any post or status update, a private group, or an event you create. Facebook links posted in a status update display with an attractive preview of the website.



## Instagram

Instagram allows users to post a link in a profile, or "bio." If you post a link on an Instagram post, it will appear but not show up live, or clickable. It's also impossible to copy/paste the link text while on your phone, so you need to re-write them by hand. This quirk effectively limits a page's ability to drive traffic back to a website.



## Twitter

On Twitter, you can post a link to your website in your bio, in a tweet, or in a paid promotional tweet called a website card. Website cards are paid on a cost-per-click basis, and they are a visually appealing way to point users to your church.

## OVERALL LINK GRADE:

Once again, we prefer Facebook for the ability to share links in several different ways and places. Twitter also has options for link sharing, but the best one is a pay-per-click tool. Because of that, we rate it second to Facebook's free link sharing features.

Facebook: A

Instagram: D

Twitter: B+

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# MAKING SOCIAL MEDIA WORK FOR YOUR CHURCH

Now you know the pros and cons of the major social networks and how these differences will impact your outreach. The next step is to look at the best way to use each of the networks to bring more people to God's love through your church.

## The 80/20 Rule

To start, it's important to know that your social media efforts won't be successful if you use your profiles like traditional advertising. Instead, social media works when you create engagement through conversations and sharing.

We recommend you follow the 80/20 rule when posting. 80% of your posts should not be related to your church, except in a tangential way. Examples of good posts that aren't specifically about your church are:

JOHN SUGGESTS ADDING THE EXAMPLE POST IMAGES HERE

- A list of great Christian books
- A how-to guide for setting up a morning devotion routine
- An inspirational C.S. Lewis quote and image
- A repost or share of a great article you found somewhere else

From there, only 20% of your posts should be promotional in nature. Here are posts that would be considered promotional:

- Announcements for upcoming programs
- Information on your new series
- Links to online services

The 80/20 rule means the majority of your posts are just helpful or entertaining. Church Plants that do too much self-promotion get the balance wrong and lose followers quickly. Remember, traditional advertising is over. Social media works because users come back for all your good, helpful information. Then they begin to trust you and want to learn more about you.

Now we'll dive into best practices for posting on each of the networks.



## Facebook

To start, we recommend you make sure your profile is fully optimized. You'll want to provide a link to your website, your correct address, an attractive cover photo, and an engaging description of your church. Add a "contact us" call-to-action button on your cover photo too.

On a day-to-day basis, take our 80/20 rule and post photos, videos, status updates, and articles. You can also ask your followers a question and expect a few answers in return. Inspirational images with quotes are also a popular way to connect with your fans and followers, and they are light and easy for your audience to read on the go.



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According to social media experts, you will have the most engagement on Facebook if you post in the early afternoon and towards the end of the workweek.<sup>14</sup> Of course, you can still post on Mondays and Tuesdays, but consider saving your most important messages for Thursday and Friday afternoon.

Finally, if you want to include a friend, business or place in your post, you can use the @ symbol before their name. When you do, the friend will receive a notification saying you've included them in a post. This process is called "tagging," or a "mention," and it is a great way to drive engagement. (Instagram and Twitter also offer this feature.)



## Instagram

Like with your Facebook profile, your Instagram bio needs to be well written and complete. Include a link to your website in your bio and use your logo as your image. Be creative with your church's description because you're limited in space.

Always post image descriptions and hashtags to expand your reach. Hashtags open your Instagram posts up to anyone who searches for that particular hashtag, so use them as much as you can. You can also cross-post your pictures on Facebook and Twitter when you post them on Instagram. Doing so is easy and saves time. Lastly, within each post description, mention that a link to your website is in your bio.

As a general rule of thumb, don't post on Instagram every day.<sup>15</sup> Posting two or three times a week is enough to keep your followers interested and engaged. Experts note that engagement on Instagram is consistent throughout the week, with a small spike on Mondays, and between 3-4pm.<sup>16</sup>

Inspirational images with quotes are great for Instagram. Videos of your band playing worship music, sermon highlights, or pictures of small groups having fun are also good choices for posts.

You can also mention or tag people or places in your Instagram posts by using the @ symbol before their user name. For instance, if you posted a picture of a small group meeting, you could use the @ symbol before the names of followers who were in the picture. That would alert them that you posted the image, and they would likely comment on the picture or reshare it.



## Twitter

Like with the other networks, set up your bio with a link to your website and your logo as your profile image. Twitter offers limited character space in bios, so be thoughtful when you craft the description of your church.

Although Twitter has a 140-character limit for tweets, social media experts suggest keeping them to 100-characters or less for best engagement. Studies show that Tweets in the 100-character range are retweeted more than longer tweets.<sup>17</sup>

As we mentioned above, tweets move from news feeds rapidly because of the sheer volume of them per day. To help make sure your message is seen, you can tweet the same thing a couple different times in one day.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/best-time-to-post-social-media/504222>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2015/01/06/instagram-marketing>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/best-time-to-post-social-media/504222>

<sup>17</sup> <https://bufferblog-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Twitter-Ebook-vfinal.pdf>

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Also, take into account that Twitter engagement tends to be higher on weekdays, between 9 am and 3 pm.<sup>18</sup>

As you do on Facebook and Instagram, you can use an @ symbol before the user name of a person or place to get their attention or include them in your tweet. But Twitter has one nuanced difference in how their mentions work. Twitter explains it best by saying:

*"A **mention** is a Tweet that contains another user's @username anywhere in the body of the Tweet. But a reply is a response to another user's Tweet that begins with the @username of the person you're replying to. You can reply by clicking the Reply button on a Tweet."*<sup>19</sup>

Similar to Instagram, Tweets with hashtags get twice the regular engagement because hashtags expose tweets to a much broader audience.<sup>20</sup> Anyone who searches for the specific hashtag you use will see your tweet. Here are some popular hashtags you might want to use for either Twitter or Instagram:

#funtimes, #music, #memories, #dailybread, #verseoftheday, #wordofgod, #dailybibleverse, #bestoftheday, #church, #churchmedia, #ministry, #missions, #sundaysetlist.

It's clear that social media is an incredible tool to connect with people in your community. We believe it's far more powerful than old, traditional advertising. Church plants that use it regularly grow their communities faster and can share God's greatness with more people. We hope this guide answered some of your questions about social media and set you up for success in outreach.

<sup>18</sup> <https://bufferblog-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Twitter-Ebook-vfinal.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://support.twitter.com/articles/14023>

<sup>20</sup> <https://bufferblog-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Twitter-Ebook-vfinal.pdf>



## Are you a church leader?

Reach is designed to generate personal, friend-to-friend, invitations to your church. We use the power of Facebook check-ins to generate *thousands* of personal invitations every week. How do we do it? Every time a member of your congregation checks in on Facebook, we make a donation to a Kingdom-building charity.

To learn how Reach can help you scale personal invites at your church, schedule a demo with us today:

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