

HOW TO MAKE **SOFTWARE** AND **PEOPLE** **PULL TOGETHER** IN THE **SAME DIRECTION**



Where is your mobile communication team heading?

[by Yvon Prehn]

*“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”
“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.
“I don’t much care where—” said Alice.
“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.*

Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There, by Lewis Carroll (1871)

With the tools of technology available to us today, the communication team at our churches is comprised of those who work at the church office full-time, part-time staff who work at the office and home, plus volunteers who work from the immediate area or anywhere on earth if they are traveling!

That’s the good part about a mobile, distributed communication team today. The challenge is, unlike Alice in the quote from *Through the Looking Glass*, it **does** matter where we want to go. We want to get to where our church communications are involving people in the activities of our church so they can come to know Jesus as Savior and grow in their faith. To get to a clear destination with a scattered communication team, we need:

- ▶ **A clear understanding of roles and goals**
- ▶ **Coordinated software**
- ▶ **A common vision and purpose**

Here’s some advice for each area based on interactions with many churches over the years, and what I’ve seen work well.

A clear understanding of roles and goals

Many churches are hesitant to use volunteers outside the church office staff because of the spoken or unspoken fear, “What if I can’t get them to do what I want them to do? What if volunteers create materials that are not appropriate or up to the quality we want for the church?”

These are valid concerns. I’ve found that almost all these concerns can be answered if you divide your church communication team into **Two Production Levels**. This way the church can keep tight control over essential, core communications, but delegate to team members those communication tasks that need to be done but that the staff seldom has time to do. The two production levels of effective church communications are the **Public Relations (PR) level** and the **Ministry Communication level**. Let’s look at both:

PR Communication Production Level

■ **WHAT IS PRODUCED?** These are the showcase pieces, the ones that represent the face of your church

overall to your community and the world. They include the logo, stationary, business cards, primary bulletin, newsletter, major outreach pieces, and the primary website and social media creation.

■ **WHO DOES IT?** Usually a staff person. The larger the church the more that church needs to hire someone to create and oversee communications. This level of communications is the face and voice of the church: it’s important that the person who does these pieces is at the church as much as possible—attending staff meetings to get to know the heart, vision and people of the church. For these reasons, it’s difficult for this person to be mobile.

■ **WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS?** Usually somewhat strict, as these pieces reflect the overall vision and reputation of the church. This is the level where the standards are set for what is expected in all other communications. A style manual for the church is very helpful where you list accepted ways of referring to pastors, staff, committees, etc., where you clarify logo usage and any style and grammar expectations.



The most important thing of all is that everyone on your team should understand they've been entrusted with the words of eternal life, that the eternal destiny of human souls can be determined by their communications.

Ministry Communication Production Level

■ WHAT IS PRODUCED?

Everything else, from very simple notices, lessons, flyers and announcements to more complex communication projects. These are the multitude of pieces needed by individual ministries of the church. Volunteers can work on these anywhere, at any time, and be effective and useful. Mobile interactions can work extremely well at this level, when the person at the top level has a clear vision and has set up style guides as suggested previously.

■ WHO DOES IT? *THIS IS*

IMPORTANT: Here a staff person (or perhaps a key volunteer) should oversee, train, encourage and help, but that person can't do everything needed for a complete

communication ministry in the church, nor should they. Ideally, every ministry in the church should have at least one person who can help do the communications needed for that ministry, who is often a key part of that ministry. At this level, the overall ministry communications staff member becomes a coach and encourager.

■ WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS?

You do not need the same high standards of design or perfection for a one-time postcard to remind the guys of the men's breakfast, or the flyer to remind parents of a special event for a Sunday School. If you're too hard on volunteers, they'll quit. The ministry communication staff person needs to decide what is essential and important in standards and what is simply picky personal preference. Also, don't try to make every volunteer create ministry

specific communications in the same style as everything else in the church.

Coordinated software

To help the PR and Ministry Communications levels work together well, you need to have coordinated software and a way to exchange files seamlessly. Fortunately, this is very easy to do with both Microsoft products (Word, Publisher, PowerPoint) by using Office 365 and Adobe Products (InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, Acrobat) by using the Adobe Creative Cloud. Here are two links to resources that will help you evaluate, understand and purchase the nonprofit licenses to get these products:

■ Consistent Computer Bargains—

I highly recommend these people as I've known them and how they help

churches since they were founded. Call them and they can explain the products, programs and whatever else you need. They can help with both MS Office 365 and Adobe Creative Cloud.

■ **TechSoup**—TechSoup provides an excellent secular explanation on how MS Office 365 works for churches. There are many useful programs today that have features to enable distributed teams to work together well on projects. (One of them is **Canva**, where you can create shared templates, folders and stylistic guidelines.)

A common vision and purpose

Your team can be well-organized and have a flawless digital, distributed workflow (all of which is very important), but the most important thing of all is that everyone on your team should understand they've been entrusted with the words of eternal life, that the eternal destiny of human souls can be determined by their communications.

Take time to create a clear, Bible-based and spiritually challenging vision statement for your communication team. Remind people of the eternal importance of what you are doing. Once everyone has the same vision, is praying together and working hard to accomplish the goals of the church and the Great Commission, they can work from nearly anywhere, and you'll have an effective church communication team. **MT**



Yvon Prehn is the founder and director of *Effective Church Communications*, www.effectivechurchcom.com, a ministry that helps churches create communications that will help them fully fulfill the Great Commission. She has been writing and teaching about church communications for over 20 years. Her latest book is *The Five Steps of Effective Church Communication and Marketing*.

Church Communicator's Bookstore

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STOP Declining Church Attendance With Your Church Communications

Yvon Prehn
Effective Church Communications

5 Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

to enable your church to fully fulfill the Great Commission

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to encourage your heart

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church bulletin gospel presentations

Samples of how churches share our most important message—how to come to know Jesus

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In a world of websites, tweets, and facebook pages. . . .

Are printed bulletins still needed in church?

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OVERVIEW of The 5 Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing

the communications you need to fully fulfill the Great Commission

Step	Goal	Strategy	Tools
1	Identify your church's mission and vision.	Develop a clear, concise statement of your church's mission and vision.	Church's mission statement, vision statement, and strategic plan.
2	Identify your church's target audience.	Develop a clear, concise statement of your church's target audience.	Church's target audience, demographics, and psychographics.
3	Identify your church's communication needs.	Develop a clear, concise statement of your church's communication needs.	Church's communication needs, goals, and objectives.
4	Identify your church's communication resources.	Develop a clear, concise statement of your church's communication resources.	Church's communication resources, budget, and staff.
5	Identify your church's communication strategies.	Develop a clear, concise statement of your church's communication strategies.	Church's communication strategies, tactics, and programs.

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