

*discover a new way to
plan, measure, and evaluate
church communications—*

**Big is
busted,
try tiny**

special edition

yvon prehn

core church communications
a series of basic publications and training from
Effective Church Communications
www.effectivechurchcom.com

Special Edition
Big is busted, try tiny
a new way to
plan, measure, and evaluate
church communications

by

Yvon Prehn

******PLEASE NOTE******

This book is a Special Edition excerpt of the
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Effective Church Communications

Contents

Thinking BIG is a bust—try tiny thinking for church communication success as you do your planning and evaluation	4
Why BIG church communications often don't work	5
The key role of church leaders in tiny thinking.....	9
Plan before you turn on the computer for church communication success	12
Reproducible Church Communication Project Planning Chart.....	20
About Yvon Prehn	21
End notes, Reprint Information, Resources, etc.	22

**God provides not for an abstraction called Man
but for individual souls.**

C.S. Lewis, *Letters*

**"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when
did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and
give you something to drink?**

**When did we see you a stranger and invite you in,
or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we
see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'**

**"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever
you did for one of the least of these brothers of
mine, you did for me.'**

Matthew 25:37-40

Thinking BIG is a bust—try *tiny thinking* for church communication success as you do your planning and evaluation

We have the greatest message of eternity to share: Jesus, the son of God walked this earth, died, was buried, and rose again. By his sinless life and sacrificial death he offers peace with God and salvation to all who believe in him.

We've got the most extraordinary tools to communicate that message in the history of the world and we use them in BIG ways: big banners, big PowerPoint announcements, videos and music, big colorful publications and websites with revolving images of beautiful people.

The result of all this communication extravaganza?

In the most technologically advanced parts of the world, the Christian church is shrinking. Sadly, it is sometimes a public mockery when the Christian faith is identified with television preachers of health, wealth, and get rich quick messages. That is not good news.

The big thinking, big preaching, big PR has been a bust.

Let's try a different approach, what we'll call tiny thinking—a focus on the details of planning and evaluation.

In this publication, we'll put aside the extravagant (not forever, it may be useful at times) and we'll look at the tiny bits and pieces of planning that form the foundation of a solid church communication program. The practical uses of these tiny bits and pieces will be illustrated by the use of FORMS of various kinds that you can use to communicate the messages of your church.

These forms will help you construct the solid foundation of facts and the information people need **to connect** with your ministry or event. The forms will also help you **evaluate** your communications and enable you to understand what is really effective and what isn't in your ministry communications and marketing.

This approach can work in any size church, with any budget. While much extravagant multi-media is only possible on a big budget, any church can make use of the tiny tips, ideas, and changes suggested in this book to make a significant difference in the impact of your communications.

Try tiny thinking. Try a focus on the little things in your planning and evaluation. Set aside the big and flashy and focus for a time on the tiny and faithful. Don't be surprised if your results might be bigger than you've ever imagined.

Why BIG church communications often don't work

Many churches seem to think that a BIG statement, either on a banner, on the website or in the bulletin will somehow magically accomplish something in the lives of the people seeing it. I'm referring to BIG statements such as these:

An announcement in the bulletin, large & bold:

Small Groups are Important to US!

A church banner, across the front of the church:

COME, GROW, GO!

Scrolling image on the website:

**Adult Education is the KEY to Christian Maturity—
Get Involved!**

I do not want to make light of sincere efforts to get people involved in activities that will help them to grow in their Christian lives, but a big encouragements without explanation or context will not enable people to take the necessary action to actually get involved. People do not have the time or motivation today to call the church office or research the details of how to find a small group or class and no matter how big the print or attractive the images the big message alone won't do much.

Tiny communication details are the vital link

Your communication pieces are the lifeline that connect people with your ministry vision. Tiny details form the links of that lifeline. Often these tiny details found in simple communications are what make the difference between someone actually attending a class, a small group, a service project, or staying at home. Communications that do this can include:

- a postcard for the refrigerator that lists time, date, child care provisions, and provides a map
- an email with the same information
- a link to website sections (added to print and email communications) that contain additional information about the events
- quick tweets, Facebook updates, text messages
- follow-up phone calls

On the communication pieces, it is often the little details, the tiny facts that are critical and often forgotten. If you don't provide the details in your communication piece it's kind of like if someone is drowning and you stand up on a boat and wave a buoy over your head. The drowning person can see what can save them, but they don't can't reach the life-saving buoy. A small rope would make a life-saving difference, it would connect the person to what would save them.

Tiny actions or communications can do the same in your communication ministry.

Sad, but true examples

Lifesaving buoys without a way to connect with them are what the “discipleship” communications are like in many church communications I look at. I know that the dear church communicators who create these pieces don’t mean to be a frustration to the folks reading them, so please know that all the difficult, but true stories shared in the rest of this book are shared in compassion and with the prayer that we can all be better communicators from considering how to make our communications truly connect, often through the addition of just a few little lines or connecting details.

Small group challenge

I recently looked at a church bulletin that stated that small groups were VERY important to the church. The huge banner across the front of the church proclaimed it, as did the PowerPoint announcements. For people to actually connect with the groups, the bulletin listed about 20 groups, by the last name of a person, along with the day it met. That was it. No contact phone number, no description of who the group was for, nothing about what was being studied, not a word about childcare, no overall number to call or website to look at.

These are not small, insignificant issues—they are vitally important if you want people to actually attend what you are promoting. The banner and the PowerPoint slides won’t make the connection.

What the bulletin might have done

Instead of simply: **“Johnson’s....Wednesday”** think about how different it would be if the small group announcement said:

Men Of Integrity Study, Wed. 7-8:30 pm

Jeff Johnson teacher, 555-5555, email: jjjj@email.com

**Bob Smith host house: 555 Every Street, City, State,
phone 333-3333**

Study materials: the book of Joshua

**Open to: all men interested in the adventure of living a
life of power and purpose**

Or it might say:

Prime Time Alive, Wed. afternoon 1-3:30

**Meredith Johnson, teacher 444-4444, email:
mmjj@email.com**

Meets at the Church Fireside Room

Study Materials: the book: *Senior Saints, the best of life*

**Open to: all women of the church, most of us are over 70
(but we won’t ask your age....we know you look younger!)**

Both of these studies fit the description: “Johnson’s....Wednesday” but they are very different studies. It’s the tiny details that make all the difference.

In addition to a brief description of the studies themselves, think about how much it would add if the church expanded the label: “Small Groups.” We assume everybody knows everybody is welcome to come at any time, but your congregation doesn’t know that. In addition, often visitors feel that groups are for “insiders only.” You have to be specific in your communications on paper and on your web site to change that perception. The addition of big graphics won’t clarify anything. A scrolling panorama of smiling faces on the website doesn’t help anyone understand anything. A few paragraphs of text like these can make a big difference:

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME AND ENCOURAGED TO
JOIN A SMALL GROUP!**

**Small groups are very important to our church because
we feel that in them we can grow to be all
Jesus wants us to be.**

**So if you are a visitor, a new member, a member for
years; if you are curious, interested, or maybe
just bored one night—
JOIN US!**

**All the groups below are open to anyone to come at any
time. You can call or email the teacher listed by each
group for more information or just show up.**

**We won’t require you to sign away your life or pay a
membership fee, but we do promise a welcoming, open
group of people who are growing to become all Jesus
wants us to be!**

An announcement like this, repeated before any listing of small groups, gives people permission to check it out and informs them it isn’t an insider group. I realize that many group leaders want people to commit to a certain time span and though that is ideal, in our commitment-adverse world today, people will more likely commit after they find something they have tried and enjoyed rather than being forced to make a commitment to something they know nothing about.

Consistent communications keep the lifeline strong

Don’t just put in the details about your discipleship ministries and opportunities once in the bulletin or a handout. Continuously have the information available in web site, your bulletin, in your welcome center, and in brochures.

In addition to clear complete communications to get people to discipleship events, be sure you have support publications at your discipleship events. If you aren’t using a printed study guide, be sure the leader provides notes and material to take additional notes. These handouts don’t need to be fancy, but

no one remembers a discussion, no matter how meaningful, if you don't have written materials to support it.

In ministry we often feel we've done enough simply to put in the hard work and study needed to prepare for discipleship training. In addition, we often pray fervently that God use us and bring people to the training. These actions are vital, but for us to have success in our discipleship priorities, we have to also create communication pieces on the web and on paper that will provide the link between our discipleship training and the people who need it.

How to create similar communications with an emphasis on the tiny, but essential information, and how to evaluate effectiveness

That is what the rest of this book is about. The rest of the book goes through the process of using a variety of communication forms that will help you think through the tiny planning and evaluation details that can make a huge difference in the effectiveness of your church communications on the growth of your church in numbers and your people in spiritual maturity.

Do be warned—a focus on tiny details, on the foundational work that needs to be done prior to creating communications and the follow-up and evaluation that needs to be done afterwards will often seem unnecessary and will most likely not be fun to do.

When those thoughts come, consider these words of Jesus:

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." Matthew 13:31-33

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." Luke 16:10

"Well done, my good servant!" His master replied. "Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities." Luke 19:17

It often seems that what is of eternal significance and greatly valued by our Lord seems little and unimportant now. But as you'll see, if you faithfully carry out the tiny details of planning and evaluation now, you will see significant results in the response of people to your ministry this side of heaven.

And better yet, though the reward Jesus will give you is in the future, for his servants who work faithfully in tiny ways, it is certain and wonderful.

The key role of church leaders in tiny thinking

This book is not only for those whose work is to actually create church communications. Church leaders must be involved in the planning and evaluation of communications in the church if they are to accomplish the mission of the church and the task of fully fulfilling the Great Commission.

Leaders must set vision and mission, but they can't walk away without making certain the vision is clearly communicated and without evaluating the results of specific actions taken to communicate it. Delegation without follow-up is irresponsible.

To illustrate what can happen without leadership involvement, consider the following true story (with identifying details altered).

From the pulpit, challenges to growth through small group involvement

The pastor of a church that is currently somewhat stalled in its growth, frequently talks about the importance of small groups in the life of the church. Small groups are in very much a key part of the four part foundation of the growth plan of the church. Not only does the pastor frequently mention them, but the importance of small groups is part of the mission statement found each week in the church bulletin and illustrated prominently with great graphics on the church website. The pastor personally, passionately believes in the power of small groups for life-change and growth in the faith.

He has delegated his passion to communicate the details of connecting with current small groups to his church communicators while he promotes them from the pulpit. He anticipates a large number of people joining new groups.

A young woman, a newcomer, comes to the church and wants to grow in her Christian life. She hears a sermon illustration about how a small group can help her grow in her faith, provide fellowship, and caring. She thinks to herself that this is just what she needs and she can't wait to join one. What does she do next?

Practical connections to involvement with small groups

This is where church communications must make the link between the pulpit challenge and the person wanting to respond.

The young woman wants to connect with small groups, so she then searches for information on how to do that. Her search consisted of these actions:

- She looks in the bulletin as she listens to the challenge. There is no list of the groups in the bulletin, other than the statement that they are important.
- At home she goes on the church website, again, no list.

- However, there is a lengthy form on the website to fill out and send in about her interest in small groups, where she lives, what she would like to learn.
- She fills out the form. She sends in her email request.
- She checks her email daily for a reply.
- Two weeks go by and no reply.
- She is somewhat shy and hesitates to call the church office.
- She fights her internal irritation at the church office for not contacting her; she feels guilty for not calling.
- She begins to wonder if this is really the church for her and is starting to doubt if she can trust the words of the pastor about anything, if what he seemed to consider so important is so hard to actually link up with.
- After a few more weeks go by with no response, she begins to visit other churches.

Meanwhile, the pastor is wondering why people aren't signing up for the current small groups when he preaches so passionately about them.

One message from the pulpit, a total disconnect in experience in the pew is not unique

I wish this sort of situation was rare, but from listening to many who share with me about their church communication experiences it seems common that statements are made from the pulpit about the importance of ministries and are not followed by the concrete details that form the links to the actual life experience of the ministries preached about.

Challenges to leaders and church communicators

- For leadership you must realize that just because a ministry is a priority to you, you preach about it, and have it as part of your mission statement, you can't assume it is connecting with people or that they can connect with it.
- For everyone involved in church communication, PLEASE take time to check and make certain that for the values and programs expressed verbally or in print, such as the importance of small groups, that there are clear, complete, and caring communications for how to actually link people to them. Tiny details create the strong links.
- In the instance above, both the website and the bulletin should have had a list of the open small groups and a direct contact phone number and email for someone who wants to join one to call or email. To ask people to "call the church office" seldom works--people today want to make direct contact.

- If a website has a form for people to send to the church, there should have been exact procedures in the church office for how to respond within 24 hours to requests from the website. If your church does not answer requests as promised, you can't expect people to trust you again. If no one will answer a website form, take it off the website.

Preaching without this foundation can be counterproductive

There is so much more at stake than simply making sure the website is up-to-date. Your credibility is at stake. For pastors and church leaders, as you make ministry plans, you must make certain that a clear communication foundation undergirds your ministry and actually connects people to the ministries you value. If that is not there you can preach your heart out about a ministry, but if people can't connect to it, disappointment or cynicism may be the result.

You have been entrusted with the words of eternal life.

Be certain that you clearly proclaim them and undergird your words with the tiny, but critically important, details and links that actually involve your people with the ministries that can change their eternity.

The following forms will help you do that and give you step-by-step directions on how to think through, plan, express, and evaluate the effectiveness of your communications.

Plan before you turn on the computer for church communication success

"If you've ever worked on a well-thought-through project, you know what a pleasure it is. And if you've worked on one that's been poorly planned, you know how frustrating it can get. Careful planning makes everyone's job easier."

Elizabeth W. Adler,
Print that Works

It is very difficult to keep the big picture of your communication goals and the tiny details needed to reach them in mind once you turn on the computer. I don't know why this is or if there is some sensible, scientific explanation for it, but I do know from years of practical experience that it's true. Once the computer screen stares back at us, rather than remembering where this piece fits into fully fulfilling the Great Commission for our church or what we are going to do to make sure this communication successfully accomplishes the goals we've set for it, it is so easy to get lost in finding the right illustration or making the computer program do what we think it is supposed to do.

If you want your communication piece, either in print or online, to accomplish the ministry goals you've set for it, you need to plan ahead, preferably on paper. Think of it as creating a road map to get you to your destination. Like a road map, not only will written goals get you where to you want to go, but the time spent planning will make your production time more efficient because you won't be wandering around aimlessly.

Church Communication Project Planning Sheet	
Project name: (Date needed)	Design, graphics, text ideas
Production considerations:	
Budget:	
Purpose: Why are we doing this?	
Goal: What do we want to accomplish with it?	
Audience: Who are they?	
Where are they: Physically?	
Emotionally?	
Spiritually?	
Our identity: Overall?	
In this piece?	

Use this Church Communication Project Planning Sheet

Planning can take anywhere from a few minutes by yourself to lengthy planning meetings with the entire staff. Whatever time you schedule to plan, please take time to do it. Using this planning chart will guide your thoughts.

There are two parts to the Planning Chart:

On the far left, with the column starting with the Project name, you fill in **the factual information and the ministry goals for about your communication project**. This content should stay the same throughout the creation of the project. Once you decide on what you want a piece to accomplish, stick with it. You can always do another version later, but if you keep changing your goals you'll never know whether you accomplish them or not.

The next section: **Design, graphics, text ideas**, is where you take the ministry goals for your communication and put them into concrete form.

This might change, if in the middle of production it is obvious a certain way of creating your communication isn't going to work. This second section may vary tremendously depending on the tools you have available in your church, the style, and overall graphic design approach of your church.

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Project name

If you are going to be creating a version both in print and online, be consistent in your names. Also, be clear with names and dates so that if someone other than you works on the project the names will make sense.

Date needed

Think about this carefully because you may need more than one date here. The most important date is when people actually need it in their hands, but other dates that might be important include:

- when you need to get it to the printer, either in your city, or online for it to get printed and shipped back to you on time
- when it needs to be done if a group of people is assembling or addressing the final product

It's very important to think about these additional deadlines because using the computer distorts many people's sense of time. Because

the computer does things instantly, though it isn't rational, we may think that as soon as we get our work done on a project, it's ready to give to people and that is seldom reality.

Production considerations

This is one of the most important areas to consider and is closely related to setting deadlines above. This is where you have to think through all the steps you need to do to get the task done and plan your time accordingly.

Creating communications with the computer isn't magic. Yes, it is a lot easier than typesetting with hot lead type and composing each line of text letter by letter, but it still takes time. Especially when you are learning new software or systems, you won't accomplish tasks quickly. Constantly ignoring the time it takes and setting unrealistic deadlines for yourself is one of the fastest ways to make you hate your job.

At first it is hard to estimate how long projects will take, for example if you are creating a new online newsletter. Give it your best guess and then record the time it actually takes. After a few issues you'll have a more realistic idea of the time and effort required. At that time, you can enter in a more realistic production schedule for the year in your calendar.

No matter how careful your scheduling, always be flexible and allow extra time to complete projects when you work in the church office. Often there will be people crisis or needs and you never want to resent time spent caring for people.

Church communication deadlines don't have to make you a nervous wreck!

The secret to successful church communication creation is to be realistic in your scheduling.

If you want to do a project well, keep up with other work demands, maintain your sanity and a good relationship with the people you work with, be realistic about the time it takes to schedule communication projects.

To help do that keep a log of the time it takes for new projects until you have a realistic idea of the work involved.

Budget

You can create wonderful communications on a low budget and sometimes budget considerations don't enter in at all. For example, doing a communication piece that will be on your website may require quite a bit of time and effort, but no additional costs.

On the other hand, for print pieces, it is amazing how much better things can look that you print in the church office if you use good paper and don't always reach for the flimsy, pastel-colored #20 bond. An extra \$10 may buy you a

ream of heavier, more opaque paper that can take an in-house brochure from slightly tacky to professional-looking.

Whatever you decide or need, enter it here.

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Purpose

Why are we doing this?

You need to look at the big picture of the Great Commission, but you need to be much more specific for each individual project. For example, if you are doing a communication piece to increase participation in small groups, you have a purpose that can be measured.

In some of the other charts presented you can track the response, but you've got to set the purpose here so you know what you are tracking.

Goal

What do we want this piece to accomplish?

For this section take the purpose above and make it specific. Give it a number that will define success if at all possible. For example, if the

purpose was to increase participation in small groups, your goal might be to train 5 new group leaders and start 5 new groups during the upcoming sermon series. Again, some of the other charts will give you a way to specifically track your communications and the results.

Audience

Who are they?

This question isn't as simple as it first appears. In our information-overloaded world, communications need to be carefully targeted to individual needs. People expect that because that is what they get in other communication areas of life.

At one time there were only three primary television networks. Today there are

networks and cable channels for every imaginable interest niche from the Golf Channel to the Cooking Channel to National Geographic and CNN.

Not so long ago, *Life* and *Look* magazines were read by everyone in America. A trip to your local Barnes and Noble bookstore today offers the reader hundreds of magazines, each tailored to the tiniest of interest areas.

There was a great fear when computers first came out that they would make all communications the same. The opposite has happened in that the computer gives communicators the option of producing a nearly infinite variety of publications.

The more precisely you identify your audience and target your communication to their interests and needs the more it will serve them and accomplish your purpose.

At this point, you might want to state your answer in more general terms. The following sections will help you be more specific in your approach.

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Where are they?

Physically?

For your communications to be effective, you can't divorce them from the context of life.

Today that means that we need to remember people's lives are extremely busy. Physically, they are full of crammed schedules and conflicting demands. Mentally, many people's minds are on overload.

To get some control, many people have taken time management classes where they are told that to get through the volume of material that bombards them each day, they should skim the headlines, read the subheads and captions, look at the pictures, and only read full text that is beneficial to them.

Studies show that most people follow that advice—they skim to see if material is useful to them. Many emails are discarded and many printed communications tossed after the reading the header or before they are opened. If we want people to read and respond to our messages, we have to keep the physical demands of life in mind as we create communications. One small application here: when you write an email, summarize the useful information in the subject line instead of using a generic label:

Don't say: Our Church Monthly Newsletter

Do say: Real reasons to hope: biblical promises and practical advice, our sermon series and small group schedule

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Emotionally?	
Spiritually?	
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In this piece?	

Emotionally?

Contemporary life hurts. Communications don't need to remind people of their pain. Communications need to provide messages that provide hope and healing.

A great way to find out about the emotional situation of your audience is to ask them, "What do you see as the great emotional needs of your fellow church members today?"

By asking them about their friends they won't personally feel put on the spot, but they will usually answer you from their experience.

Keep those needs in mind as you create your communications. For example, if in our informal survey, a number of people said they felt lots of people were lonely, we might want to feature the fellowship benefits of small group membership in our communications about small groups.

Spiritually?

Is your audience presently involved in your church or ministry? If your communication piece is for a totally in-house group such as church education teachers or the mission's committee, you don't need to define the meaning of salvation or baptism. Jargon is acceptable if everybody understands the meaning of the terms. Jargon then becomes a kind of shorthand way of communicating. But if your audience doesn't understand your jargon and if the terms aren't meaningful to them, you'll lose them.

Jargon Quiz:

Do you know the meaning of the following terms?

ASM

FUMC

H.U.G.S.

These are all real acronyms used by real churches.

Here is their meaning along with my comments:

ASM means All-City Social Ministries. A visitor to the church that wanted volunteers for this would have no idea that is what it was asking for.

FUMC means First United Methodist Church. When first attending there a visitor related to me that the people of the church always referred to the church as "First Church." She said for months she wondered what a "foomac" was.

H.U.G.S. is a Sunday school class and the acronym stands for “helping us grow as singles.” At first this sounds like some kind of emotional, social group. Newcomers might be put off by the fear that they might have to hug everybody. None of these acronyms are self-explanatory. Always remember what it means to be a stranger and not know the jargon.

In addition to acronyms, be very careful about any abbreviation

Be sure to spell out all terms on the first reference for insider communications and put the abbreviation in parenthesis. Try not to use abbreviations at all in material for visitors. If you spell out the complete terms, even though it might be a boring pain-in-the-neck to do it for you, they will not be confused.

Bible abbreviations can be just as confusing for those who grew up without church training. Some helpful tips in communicating to this group:

- Always spell out books of the Bible.
- Explain how references work for studies designed for unchurched people.
- In bulletins or similar materials, include a page number by a Bible reference for those who are using pew Bibles.
- If there is room, include some website references for people to learn more about the Bible or if they want to look up Bible verses online. Two you might use are:
 - www.biblegateway.com
 - www.blueletterbible.org

Our identity

Who are we overall?

Each of our churches are only parts of the body of Christ, not the whole thing. No church is able and shouldn't even try to be all things to all people. Your communications need to reflect your uniqueness.

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The book of Nehemiah illustrates the importance of doing your part. In this book the Israelites were rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. The wall was their national security system and a source of national identity.

To rebuild it, various groups and family members worked on assigned sections. With each group working on their part and knowing they could call for help if they needed it, the entire wall was built, Israel was protected from their enemies, and was restored as a nation.

But imagine what would have happened if, instead of attending their assigned section, each family member ran around the city, laying a brick here or there, thinking they were responsible for rebuilding the entire wall all by themselves?

Not only would they have been exhausted, but the job as a whole probably wouldn't have gotten done. Fortunately, they trusted the assignments of their leadership, did their part, and the wall was built.

We each need to work on our part of building up the kingdom of God. Each church has an audience they are assigned to reach—our challenge as we plan is to clarify who we are overall and who is that audience.

Take time to clarify your distinctive identity and allow it to guide your communications. Communicate your identity clearly. Work on your part of the wall with joy.

Our identity

In this piece

Always keep in mind the overall mission and purpose of your church and ministry, then specifically state what part of that message you want to

emphasize in the particular communication piece you are working on.

For example, you might be a liturgical church and in this piece you want to communicate the history of your church or in another piece, why the history of your church encourages your involvement in social justice issues. Like with many other parts of this planning form, the more specific you can be in stating your goals, the more focused and successful your communication piece will be.

Church Communication Project Planning Sheet	
Project name:	Design, graphics, text ideas
Date needed:	
Production considerations:	
Budget:	
Purpose: Why are we doing this?	
Goal: What do we want to accomplish with it?	
Audience: Who are they?	
Where are they: Physically?	
Emotionally?	
Spiritually?	
Our identity: Overall?	
In this piece?	



Turning goals into graphics

Once you've filled in all the tiny, but important parts of your communication piece then go to the next column and brainstorm how you can turn those parts into concrete communications and images.

Every image, typeface, paper choice, or layout design you use should work towards clarifying and communicating your message. Don't pick images, colors or type, just because you like them or think they look great—always, always, ask, “does this help me communicate my message?”

If you need help in selecting images, type, and using other graphic design tools to effectively communicate your message, the sections of the website: www.effectivechurchcom.com will help you.

Here is an example of the chart filled out for the production of a church newsletter. It doesn't really take a lot of time or work to carefully think through the tiny details of what you need to do, to write them down, and to have a way to make yourself and your church communication team accountable for the results of your church communication ministry.

Desktop Publishing Project Planning Sheet	
Project name: <i>Church newsletter, CNLET</i>	Design, graphics, text ideas
Date needed: <i>Send out 25th of each month.</i>	
Production considerations: <i>Need to begin on the first to mail 25th, earlier if work allows.</i>	<i>Consistent template, length, format, to make production easier.</i>
Budget: <i>Can we afford better paper?</i>	<i>Tan recycled would be nice.</i>
Purpose: Why are we doing this? <i>To increase involvement of members in church activities.</i>	<i>Make information easy to read, layout clear, schedule printed inside.</i>
Goal: What do we want to accomplish with it? <i>To increase Sunday School class attendance.</i>	<i>Include descriptions of classes. Show teachers' pictures. Describe activities of classes.</i>
Audience: Who are they? <i>Church members, both sexes, all ages.</i>	<i>Fairly conservative design so it will appeal to everybody. No wild graphics or colors.</i>
Where are they: Physically? <i>Busy lives.</i>	<i>Make articles short and to the point. Show why it is worth their time. No fluff.</i>
Emotionally? <i>Lonely, needing friends of similar beliefs.</i>	<i>Stress fellowship with Christians. Excellent teaching. Print small group schedule.</i>
Spiritually? <i>Christians mostly.</i>	<i>OK to use Bible verses and scriptural references.</i>
Our identity: Overall? <i>We are a church that emphasizes outreach, growth in our walk with God and fellowship.</i>	<i>Use church logo, keep address and phone number easy to find.</i>
In this piece? <i>We want to emphasize our fellowship with each other and opportunities for Christian growth.</i>	<i>Clearly state goals of fellowship and growth in upbeat, fun ways. Use photos.</i>

Church Communication Project Planning Sheet

Project name:	Design, graphics, text ideas
Date needed:	
Production considerations:	
Budget:	
Purpose: Why are we doing this?	
Goal: What do we want to accomplish with it?	
Audience: Who are they?	
Where are they: Physically?	
Emotionally?	
Spiritually?	
Our identity: Overall?	
In this piece?	

End notes, Reprint Information, Resources, etc.

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I would appreciate you linking to the website, www.effectivechurchcom.com.

PLEASE let your friends know about our ministry of helping church communicators and the resources we have for them at www.lulu.com/yvonprehn.

Interview info:

If you would like to interview Yvon Prehn on any of the topics in this publication or any topic related to church communications for either print articles or other media, I'd be happy to chat—contact me through yvon@effectivechurchcom.com. I have done extensive radio work, some television, and am comfortable with unscripted interviews, call-in, and talk formats.

Additional resources, training and church communication instruction:

The website: www.effectivechurchcom.com has hundreds of articles, videos, podcasts and additional resources to help you grow as an effective church communicator. The website has free materials, low-cost downloadable communication helps, and materials available to members only,

Effective Church Communications also has a church communication resources storefront at www.lulu.com/yvonprehn that sells downloadable and paperback books and instructional materials on CDs.

Citation note:

Some of the material here appeared in earlier versions of articles in *Christian Computing Magazine*, articles in my newsletters or other publications, my misc. books and reprints, or on my website, www.effectivechurchcom.com. I'm always advising church communicators of the importance of repetition and I repeat key articles, advice, and key communication teachings in many ways.

Scripture versions and citations:

Unless otherwise noted, Bible verses are from the New International Version.

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Comments, corrections, questions, suggestions for additional articles or information to help church communications etc.

Please send to yvon@effectivechurchcom.com

And may the Lord give you strength, joy, wisdom, and peace as you serve Him in church communications ministry,

Yvon Prehn

Ventura, CA

About Effective Church Communications

Effective Church Communications is a ministry that provides training, resources, and inspiration to help church communicators

fully fulfill the Great Commission. The hub of our ministry is our website: www.effectivechurchcom.com.

Our approach to church communications includes more than design and communication construction how-tos, though we have lots of them. It includes foundational, biblical teaching related to communications, communication leadership, and church communication teams. We constantly remind church communicators that we have been entrusted with the words of eternal life and the eternal destinies of people depend on how well we communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Though we work hard to stay current with technology (our training is web-based, we tweet, podcast, and are moderate tech junkies), we value and teach timeless communication skills and principles. The majority of our training has application in every communication channel from print to podcasts.

We believe churches of every size, from tiny house churches to mega-churches benefit from clear, effective communication and we strongly emphasize that churches be who they are in their communications to their unique congregation and to the community they are called to reach. We strongly encourage churches to study their people, set goals, evaluate response to communication projects, consistently and clearly communicate, rather than copy the latest mega-church or marketing trend.

We do not allow, encourage, link to, or promote, in any way, irreverent, profane language or snarky, cynical approaches to church communication or in the discussion of it. We serve a holy God and we seek in all we do to walk worthy and communicate a worthy message.

We strongly believe church communicators, from any size church, who use any software, with any skill level, can help and encourage each other and we have a number of ways church communicators can share and interact through our website.

Though we encourage church communicators to pour their hearts, minds and souls into the hard work of communicating the words of eternal life, we are constantly aware that our words will only accomplish eternal results because of the blessing of them, and His working through them, by our eternal God.



About Yvon Prehn

Yvon Prehn is the founder and director of the training site for church communicators, www.effectivechurchcom.com.

Yvon has worked in communication ministry for over 25 years. She was a free-lance newspaper reporter and religion writer for the *Colorado Springs SUN*. She was a top-rated, national trainer in desktop publishing for Padgett/Thompson, the nation's largest one-day seminar company when desktop publishing was first invented. She worked as a communications consultant and trainer for many of the ministries headquartered in Colorado Springs and was senior editor at both Compassion International and Young Life International. For fourteen years she traveled full-time all over North America teaching seminars on church communications.

Yvon has written for many of the major Christian magazines. Her most recent books include: *Church Bulletins, how to create and use them to touch and change lives*, *Church Connection Cards*, *The Five Steps of Effective Church Communications & Marketing*, available at www.lulu.com/yvonprehn.

Yvon has a master's degree in Church History and has done additional extensive graduate work in theology and communications. She has taught high school English and was an adjunct professor in church history at Regis University.

In addition to her formal experience, Yvon gets the opportunity to practice church communications in very practical ways. She is the wife of a bi-vocational pastor and does the secretarial and church communications work for her husband Paul, in addition to co-teaching in a variety of ministry settings at the church they work with in Ventura, California.