

Chapter 5 Digital Evangelism

What is digital Evangelism

Digital evangelism is the strategic integration of various digital tools, online technologies and channels into the mission of sharing the gospel of Jesus with others, and soliciting their commitment to become disciples of Christ and members of a faith community.

In Luke 8:1-11 we discover that a sower does not limit himself to a particular type of soil; he farms on the rocky, thorny, fertile and less fertile. In these closing hours of earth's history, gospel sowers are expected to be present on every soil type utilizing the best or most relevant farming methods. Christ's message must be proclaimed to all or as many people as possible. Digital evangelism is a potent approach. Technology provides the opportunity for connecting with a global audience.

Ellen White said; "New methods must be introduced. God's people must awake to the necessities of the time in which they are living. Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the past; but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism" (Testimonies For the Church Vol. 6, p. 96-97).

Through digital evangelism gospel proclaimers are able to accomplish multiple evangelistic objectives. Five of these principal objectives are;

1. To reach people beyond geographical and cultural borders and develop relationship with them.
2. To equip all those who are reached with relevant and potent knowledge, resources, services, acts of kindness, compassionate care, support and assistance.
3. To rescue and assimilate into the community of believers, all those who have developed conviction to live in a saving relationship with Christ.
4. To retain those who are rescued into the community of faith , through doctrinal instructions and sharing of norms that assist them to develop the culture and lifestyle of the community of faith.
5. To disciple the believers to become committed and active members, who participate in the mission of Christ and serve fellow human beings.

To achieve these five goals (objectives) of digital evangelism, there needs to be a combined or collaborative effort on the part of members who proclaim the Good News of Christ through digital channels.

The effective utility of practical technological means to reach, equip, rescue, retain and disciple people in the faith of Jesus, will greatly help the church to become a larger and more dynamic community of faithful Christian believers.



Executing Digital Evangelism in Phases

Phase 1

The Phase of intentional Planning and Strategizing

This is the phase in which the digital witnesses develop the vision. During the intentional planning and strategizing phase, the requirements listed below are carefully dealt with.

- Establish a collaborative or digital evangelism committee
- Put a prayer coordination process in place
- Appoint technicians
- Identify online resources and broadcast platforms to be utilized
- Appoint bible knowledge mentors
- Choose marketing specialists
- Determine the target audience
- Select the delivery platforms
- Identify and acquire the required technological resources
- Determine the leadership team and training needs and schedule
- Choose the social media and other online platforms that members will use to connect with target audience (and what strategy and training is needed) for online preparation
- Define the online resources that are prospect focused (such as Bible Studies, etc.)
- Establish the execution date and strategy
- Develop the prospect response mechanism and distribution and follow up procedure
- Define contingency plans if a system failure or glitch is encountered
- Set in motion the internal communications and Total Member Involvement onboarding strategy.
- Craft a digital promotion plan to reach prospects
- Determine budget for the campaign

Phase 2

The phase of Mobilizing and Total Membership Involvement

In this phase, every member of the Church with a social media account in is invited to connect with one or more persons who are not of their faith that they would like to see saved in the Kingdom of God. They should invite them to connect to a designated bible study platform and do the recommended bible lesson series. Upon completion of each of the lesson, the member may engage in a review or just to have a conversation with the student about the lesson. It could be from just, how was the lesson? to engaging in a discussion.

At the end of the series of online bible lessons study, the member should try to secure a decision from the student concerning a total commitment to Christ. The member may refer the student to a bible knowledge mentor in the church or invite the student to a digital or online evangelistic program that is planned or in progress. The member should share all the possible credentials for the student to connect and become engaged in such online campaign. A part of the special highlight at the end of the bible study should be a graduation ceremony where certificate will be distributed to student.

To make the graduation meaningful, it is important that each local church makes it a major evangelist initiative by inviting many persons within their localities to take the bible course. Persons who are not able to navigate the technology to complete the lessons, can have a member of the Church sign up for them and do the study with them directly, by calling and studying with them by phone or by face-to-face means where possible.

Members can download the lessons or they may utilize lessons made available to them through their local church. Completing a bible lesson series before an online evangelistic campaign is one of the most potent ways of preparing individuals to make decision for Christ during the actual public digital campaign. It is a major pre-digital evangelism preparation initiative to have people ready to make decision for the Lord and be baptized as members of the body of Christ.

Online Platforms For Digital Evangelism

Social Media and other online evangelism channels continue to explode with the regular and periodic development and accessibility of additional platforms. The ability to connect, communicate and receive messages are made easier and easier. Some of the platforms and digital means that are available for use are:

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| i. WhatsApp | ii. YouTube |
| iii. Twitter | iv. Instagram |
| v. Television | vi. Radio |
| vii. Facebook | viii. Tik-ToK |
| ix. Snapchat | x. Cable |
| xi. Messenger | xii. WeChat |
| Xiii. Tumblr | xiv. Viber |
| xv. Pinterest | xv. Linkedln |

Phase 3

Conducting the Online Campaign

The Collaborative Evangelism team shall coordinate, give leadership to and promote the program to achieve the goal of this online evangelism program. The team shall organize graduation ceremonies, details for the online evangelistic program, promotion and execution of the actual proclamation aspect of the campaign.

At this point, the team must ensure that the essentials for executing the program listed below that should have been determined during the phase of intentional Planning and Strategizing are actually arranged. Combined with the others, all must now be placed in motion.

1. Essentials for Execution of the program

- i. The date and duration of the Campaign
- ii. The online or digital evangelist
- iii. The technical assistants and assistance needed
- iv. The media through which the program will be broadcasted
- v. Distribution of the names and contact information of all the persons who registered beforehand by taking the bible lessons, to selected persons or bible knowledge mentors for follow-up with them
- vi. The personnel who will contact and follow-up with each of the prospects daily, during the campaign, in order to take decisions
- vii. Develop the program and assign personnel for the nightly or daily meetings during the campaign
- viii. Invite all the members of the churches to pray for this evangelistic initiative.

2. Suggestions for Promoting the program:

- i. Advertisement campaign in the churches
- ii. 30 second promotion - on social media
- iii. Short dynamic dialogue between two or more members/youth
- iv. Use of the church's official media, TV, radio, website
- v. Involve persons on social media in the church to promote
- vi. Teasers – 30 seconds promotions announcing that something is going to happen (build expectations).

3. How each local Church will participate

- i. Establish Bible studies goal
- ii. Execute the Bible study plan
- iii. Promote the online campaign
- iv. Secure commitment of each member to invite someone to watch or listen the presentations during the actual campaign meetings
- v. Develop an online evangelism response database with a response card or code
- vi. Make the response card or code available to all church members
- vii. When the preacher makes the call and gives instructions for completing the response card, all members send the card or the code to their invited listeners.

Thom Rainer unearthed through research, that pastors and their preaching were the most influential elements in people's choice of accepting Christ and a church. In calling disciples Mark wrote of Jesus, "He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach (Mark 3: 14 NAS). The twelve were with Him, they observed what He did and then, He sent them out to do what He had done. His preaching served as the primary

example for His followers then and is similarly relevant for preachers today, irrespective of the method or channel that they use to convey the message.

Preaching that reach unbelievers effectively in an online campaign and lead them to acceptance of Christ and association with a local congregation must satisfy the following: 1) biblically based Christ-centered content, 2) preacher that is genuine or authentic, 3) emboldened and inspired by the Holy Spirit, 4) message that is relevant to unchurched or uncommitted listeners, 5) illustrations that capture attention and engaging, 6) energetic and dynamic delivery of the message, and 7) appeal that is persuasive.

Jesus, Peter, and Paul connected with the people they sought to reach by going to them. Their sermons were not like the public oration of their day. They were relevant to the lives of their listeners. They treated the people with respect as they proclaimed the word and spoke in ways that the listeners clearly understood. They dealt with issues that were of interest to their hearers and touched their lives in a direct manner. Online preachers must be similarly relevant.

Online preaching requires that the preacher deliberately connects with the mind and heart of listeners to help them understand the message and the spiritual truth that it brings. That is an appeal to the cognitive and affective dimensions of the human psyche. This connection begins with demonstration of identification with the listeners, respect for them and appreciation of their acceptance to connect. Paul summarized his approach toward people, "Though I am free from all [men], I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more" (I Cor. 9: 19 NAS). Jesus demonstrated respect to people that possibly no one else in his culture at the time would have done. Consider the following: the woman caught in adultery, a Samaritan woman spurned by people of the community in which she lived who was forced to draw water in the heat of the day (John 8:1-11), tax collectors (Mark 2:13-17), lepers (Luke 17:11-19), prostitutes (Luke 7:41-44, and officers of the Roman army (Matt. 8: 5-14).

How to Increase Audience Engagement in Your Digital Campaign Meetings

Audience Engagement in digital evangelism campaign meetings is the growth of attention, interest, knowledge and participation or connection of individuals in the actual campaign events. When the people comprising the audience are engaged, they automatically share their experience and knowledge with others and motivate those within their sphere of influence to access the program likewise.

Audience engagement could be negative, positive or average. If it is negative, people may not connect regularly and they may speak unenthusiastically about the program that will not be inviting to those who have not accessed the program. It might even discourage some of those who have. In the case of the average, the listeners will not be eager to return and may not seek or invite others to access the program. Positive engagement is what all online gospel proclaimers desire. The positively engaged talk about the program with passion, enthusiastically share their experience to whomsoever they meet, cannot wait for the next occasion and invite others to connect.

1. Get as many guests as possible to register
2. Assemble a digital campaign kit and send it to invitees or participants
3. Find a way to foster personal connections

4. Provide solutions to everyday challenges
5. Present keys to future satisfaction to people
6. Pose key questions and ask the people to respond
7. Create a reaction sheet for them to respond to
8. Feature real-time illustrations during the meetings
9. Ask listeners to submit questions in comments or through a chat tool
10. Respond to questions
11. Offer special recognitions and appreciations
12. Share personal experiences
13. Highlight important characteristics about the audience or current issues
14. Show visual images that are compelling.
15. Elaborate on what is at stake for the listeners
16. Provide humorous observations or anecdotes
17. Explain to listeners how the subject being presented relate to them
18. Solicit the involvement *of the audience* by making the topic immediate, personal, and local to them

Phase 4

The Phase of Retention

A program of between six and twelve weeks of online conservation should be held to instruct and guide the newly baptized believers in their new found relationship with Christ and the community of believers. The chapters on; How to Effectively Nurture New Believers and For the New Believer, provide indebt information on how to nurture and consolidate them in the faith.

Summarized 18 Steps in Digital Evangelism

1. Establish prayer team and present the program to the Lord
2. Establish the development and execution team
3. Develop the vision
4. Communicate with the church members and get them involved
5. Determine a date for the preparation and launch a massive bible study campaign
6. Develop a broad database of people studying bible lessons
7. Determine a date for the actual rescue campaign
8. Promote for and invite people to connect and receive the message
9. Determine and or develop a customized digital platform or portal to share and access specific information
10. Get members to share the live campaigns – do watch parties
11. Conduct the actual campaign
12. Have an online consultation space or chat room or call center for after the meeting reflections
13. Assign prospects to teams and small groups through some electronic or social media platforms
14. Follow-up daily with the prospects
15. Arrange for and baptize those who are prepared and ready
16. Provide retention program for the baptized
17. Have a follow-up program for non-baptized
18. Engage the members of the sabbath school units or small groups

Suggested items for the digital campaign kit

1. Bible lesson series
2. Campaign note pad
3. Campaign logo
4. Campaign pins
5. Campaign caps, shirts, patch, stickers, etc.
6. Campaign posters and brochures
7. Campaign promotional videos

Online Witnesses

Engaging members of the Church as online witnesses is an important aspect digital witnesses. Churches may develop Online Witnesses (OW). This is a group of church members who commit themselves to maintain strong online presence and through their knowledge and use of all possible forms of digital and technological tools, influence others to; a) practice healthy lifestyle habits, b) accept Jesus as their Savior, c) participate in the life and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and d) join the network of Online witnesses.

Each OW is expected to be a social relationship asset with a growing number of followers and shall determine and utilize an online platform on the open web as the major tool that provides the menu of topics in their niche to influence followers.

OW may collaborate with other OW to challenge each other in the number of followers they will have and the number that make actual decisions in relation to the four stated objectives.

Churches should recruit and organize the Witness around common themes. They may even have them to register and receive special credentials. They may be required to update their membership periodically and may be ranked, based on the number of followings that they have.

OW shall be involved in blogging and shall make regular posts on relevant topics that are posted on the selected platforms. It is expected that they will generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views.

Online Witnesses may choose to influence according to various niches such as:

1. Answers to frequently asked bible questions
2. Bible Study Topics
3. A selected television Series
4. A Place of Worship and Fellowship
5. Video Sermons
6. Christian Media Ministries
7. Facebook Interest Group
8. Adventist YouTube Channel

Online Witnesses may be classified accordingly:

1. Mega-OW – Those who influence 100 or more followers on the social networks.
2. Macro-OW – Those who influence between 50-99 persons
3. Micro-OW – Those who influence between 20 – 49 persons
4. Beginner-OW – Those who influence between 1-19 persons.

Other Areas of Importance

1. Rules and process for blogging
2. Providing Video content
3. Podcasting
4. Social Posts Only
5. Mega-OW may be featured on the Website of the Church or some other strategic places in the domain of the Church.

Ideal Platform of Online Witnesses

Each Online witness should determine the platform that they will utilize to influence followers. A list of Online Platforms are listed under the heading, Platforms for Digital Evangelism, that is mentioned earlier. Online witnesses may choose to use any of those or others not listed. It may be ideal for them to utilize the existing accounts that they have on whatever platform that they are active. This will enable continuity and easy access to friends and or followers whom they want to influence, since they are already in their data base.

Conclusion

Digital evangelism is a technological strategy that utilizes all forms of digital and social media channels to share the gospel of Jesus and solicit responses of those who are connected to make commitment for Christ and membership into the community of faith. This approach is one of the “New methods” introduced by church leaders to lead people to Christ as people awake to the necessities of the time in which they are living. Ellen White said; “The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers” Gospel Workers, p. 352. Effective digital evangelism that leads many souls to Christ and membership in the local church community is the sum total of combined efforts between members and leaders.

Digital evangelism should achieve at least five goals through the collaborative effort of members who are digital proclaimers of the Good News of Christ. By utilizing all relevant and practical technological means to reach, equip, rescue, retain and disciple people in the faith of Jesus, the result will be a church of faithful disciples. Executing this type of evangelism may be achieved through the phases of: intentionality, connect and knowledge acquisition and preaching in the online campaign. digital proclaimers of the Good News must be aware of the available social media Platforms for accessing the online Evangelistic campaign and how to engage the use of them.

The summarized 18 steps in digital evangelism, how to increase engagement in the digital campaign meetings and suggested items for the digital campaign kit are among the essential elements to be studied, understood and embraced in order to achieve success in the program. It

must not be forgotten or overlooked that after ever digital evangelism campaign meetings, there must be intentionally planned and executed retention programs to nurture the newly baptized person in the faith through instructions in the doctrinal teachings of the bible and the culture and practice of the faith.

Form for organizing your digital evangelism team

Collaborative Evangelism Committee Members	Names	Ministries
Date of the Campaign		
Description	Name	Contact Information
Evangelist		
Prayer Coordinator		
Technical Assistants		
Bible Instructors		
Nightly Program Coordinators		
Marketing Coordinators		
Other Info.		
Other Info.		

Review and Discussion

- *What is digital evangelism?*
- *What are some of the goals of digital evangelism?*
- *Explain or define each of the goals of digital evangelism mentioned.*
- *Identify and explain the four phases of digital evangelism covered in this chapter*
- *Name ten steps of digital evangelism and explain the significance of each*
- *Describe the phase of preaching in the online campaign*
- *What is audience engagement in digital evangelism and how can you build it?*
- *Prepare a complete ready to be implemented digital evangelism program for a local church or region*
- *Explain the Web of Online Witnesses and develop a complete ready to be implemented online witnesses program for your local church.*