

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

# Best Practices for Digital Ministry Strategy - Episode 163

## *The New Front Door of the Church (Part 3)*

How do you reach new guests when most people are staying home most of the time? The need for a digital engagement strategy isn't going away anytime soon. The question we keep hearing from pastors is, "Are there any examples we can follow?" In this episode, Tony and Amy share best practices and stories from real churches around the country who are implementing a digital engagement strategy effectively. You'll find some practical things you can implement right away, as well as clarity around the longer-term picture of where your church needs to make pivots.

Before you listen, note that this is Part 3 of this series on The New Front Door, so if you haven't yet, go back and listen to the first part (**Episode 161**) on the [three strategies churches need for connecting new people to faith and church](#), and the second part (**Episode 162**) on [how churches build a digital engagement strategy](#).

## *How Churches Need to Pivot Their Digital Engagement Strategies*

- Personal invites used to account for 80 to 90 percent of first-time guests at churches. Because of the pandemic, people are spending more time at home and more time online than ever. They're more isolated from neighbors, co-workers, parents at the ballfields, etc. Word-of-mouth connections for our churches are less likely to occur. Most of those personal invites to church are not happening now; that's why very few new people are connecting with churches in this season.
- The people we are trying to reach are online. We have to adapt—and quickly. Our digital engagement strategy is the new front door.
- One important note: As the lead pastor, you can't develop and execute this digital engagement strategy. Instead, you need to find a leader who will build a team to develop and execute this strategy.
- When you have established who you are trying to reach, review the following specific components of a digital engagement strategy that your church probably needs to address to expand the front door.

## 6 Key Components of a Digital Strategy That Engages New People

❑	<b>A visitor-friendly website.</b>  Most church websites are designed to answer questions and provide content for people who <i>are already connected</i> to your church. It should be an obvious and seamless experience for a new person to take their first step to connect with your church without calling someone or emailing someone with questions.
❑	<b>A Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategy.</b>  Someone on your team needs to be thinking about how to optimize your website so that the people you are trying to reach find your site when they are searching for answers to questions. You should contract out the technical aspects of an SEO strategy, rather than hiring a staff person.
❑	<b>Live chat.</b>  Chat features are common on just about every website now, and that needs to be a feature you add to your site as well. People (especially young adults) avoid phone calls, but they'll engage in a chat session.
❑	<b>A relationship-building strategy.</b>  Engage with the people you are trying to reach online via email lists, newsletters, social media, etc. Stop using these platforms to only share information about what's happening at your church. Start using them to interact with the people you are trying to reach. Think: <i>building relationships</i> vs. <i>promoting your church</i> .
❑	<b>A content strategy.</b>  Increasing relational interaction will also help you shape your content strategy (via articles, podcasts, videos, etc.) to address the opportunities and challenges people are facing in their lives. In your community, you want to become the "trusted expert" on all areas of health: <i>relational, emotional/mental, physical, financial, family, parenting, spiritual, etc.</i>
❑	<b>Dedicated landing pages with calls-to-action.</b>  You'll need landing pages on your website for specific content offerings. If you offer something of value, like a well-done eBook or webinar on a topic that matters to people today, they'll give you their contact information in exchange. That also opens the door for you to continue to provide helpful content and nurture the relationship.

## Examples from Real Churches

- [Connexus Church](#) (Canada) - Traditional contact cards (even online versions) weren't working. They pivoted to an eBook on *Experiencing God Personally* and saw results. → *Connexus was kind enough to provide this eBook for our listeners!* [Download it here.](#)
- [Grace Church](#) (Massachusetts) - Started hosting [Webinar Wednesdays](#) on topics like overcoming fear and anxiety, talking to kids about racism, starting a thriving business, and keeping your kids safe online.
- [Crossroads Church](#) (Ohio) - Revamped its website to reach an online audience, positioning themselves as “spiritual outfitters” to help people take steps on their spiritual journey. Check out their [30-day trial](#) to equip people with resources to begin the journey.
- [Westside Community Church](#) (Oregon) - Launched a new podcast... only it's not your typical church podcast with a replay of the Sunday message. Lead pastor Gabe Kolstad and his wife Melissa have started a podcast called [Marriage Monthly](#) to help marriages that are under pressure in this season, and ultimately help the church connect with new people.
- [Sun Valley Community Church](#) (Arizona) - Hosted a digital marriage retreat—more than 900 couples participated, and one third of them were brand new people.

## Next Steps

Sign up for [Unstuck Leadership Coaching](#).

We've had a lot of pastors reach out asking, “*Am I the right leader to take us into the future?*” The leadership you were prepared for may not be the leadership your church needs going forward, but God gave you the role you have for a time like this. And you're not alone.

For the last 10 years, we've been providing pastors with an ally—coaching them as they lead churches towards a new vision for the future, with the goal of continually reaching new people and helping them take next steps towards Christ. We want to walk with you and be an ally in your corner. We can help you change the way you lead as you lead change. [Learn how to get started.](#)

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