

LEADER CONVERSATION GUIDE

Nona Jones on Engaging People in Digital Spaces, and Jeff Brodie on the Digital Shift at Connexus Church - Episode 166

Practical Conversations to Help You Start Positioning for Long-Term Digital Success

As part of a recent Unstuck Masterclass, Tony had the opportunity to interview Nona Jones and Jeff Brodie on the shift that's happening from engaging new people with in-person services to engaging them online. Nona serves as the head of Facebook's faith-based partnerships, and Jeff is the lead pastor at Connexus Church in Barrie, Ontario. They each brought a unique perspective on how the church can engage and reach people in a digital culture, and we think it will give you some practical handles for doing so at your church as well.

Key Takeaways from the Interview with Nona Jones

- Somewhere along the line of the history of the Church, we've come to define church as a place you go or a program you watch, and because of that, people have been slow to adapt to anything other than strategies that get people to a building. When you think about how social technology has been used thus far, it has predominantly been for marketing to get people to the building.
- The traditional form of media is **broadcast**. It's A to B. It's about sharing information. (e.g. "I have a message. I'm going to send it out to the masses. Hopefully they receive it. I don't really know.")
- **Social technology** is completely different from broadcast technology. It's A to B, and B to C, and C to A. It's about facilitating relationships.
- Most of our churches are still set up to broadcast.
- On "the death spiral of church"... Jesus told us to go out, but instead of being fishers of men, we decided to tend an aquarium. And most churches have gotten smaller and smaller. We are now the keepers of fishbowls, not even aquariums.
- If we truly want to build God's kingdom, we are going to have to realize that this idea that church requires a date, time and location is completely limiting.
- On how churches should rethink how they use Facebook... Imagine your Facebook presence as a house. Your Page is like your *front porch*, the public space. Anybody driving along the street can see your front porch. Facebook Live is like opening your *front door*,

interacting with the people on your front porch. But if you only have a front porch and a front door, what you really have is a “movie set.” It doesn't really help; it's just aesthetic. What you need is a *living room*, a space where people can sit down and have conversations. And that is what Facebook Groups are.

Key Takeaways from the Interview with Jeff Brodie

- A few days into the COVID-19 shutdowns, they realized they needed to restructure the whole staff. They simplified it and broke the staff into two categories: **Content and Communications** (to put out a lot of content really quickly) and **Connections** (to connect people who were joining them online).
- Pre-pandemic, more than 90% of new guests at their facility had watched online for up to a year. Now new guests online are often seeing them for the first time.
- They tried a LOT of things to compel new guests to fill out a digital connect card, but nothing was working. Now, they're borrowing from content marketing strategies and using a lead magnet: a resource people want that they're willing to make a value exchange to get. (e.g. “*This is valuable enough to me that I'm going to give you my email address.*”)
- In the six weeks after they switched to the lead magnet, Connexus saw more new guests share their information than did in all the previous months of the pandemic combined.
- Rethink the language you're using. Who's a guest? What does engagement mean to you? What is connection? What is community? What is gathering “in-person”? Clear language will go a long way in building internal clarity on your team about the wins.
- Connexus is making plans now to pivot their staffing budget for the long-term to re-organize around planning content, not just services and programming.

Next Steps

- Read [From Social Media to Social Ministry](#) by Nona Jones
- Check out Connexus Church's most successful [lead magnet](#), an eBook Jeff Brodie wrote called *Experiencing God Personally*.

Listen to the episode on iTunes or at theunstuckgroup.com/episode166.