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Cause+Effect

6

SIX STEPS TO CREATING ONLINE SMALL GROUPS

In this season, the need for online small groups has become essential for churches as most are choosing to cancel their physical gatherings. With so many people in isolation, online gatherings need to be as personal as possible to create the most significant level of human connection. Here are our step-by-step recommendations for hosting your online small groups:

1 STEP ONE

REGISTRATION AND CONNECTION

Even if your congregation has established small groups or Sunday School classes, you need to offer an opportunity for new people to connect to small groups who haven't done so already.

GroupVitals is a great tool that we strongly recommend. It allows you to manage registration for your groups, measure attendance, and is free for up to five groups and very affordable if you have more.

2 STEP TWO

COMMUNICATION

Once someone signs up for a group, they need to receive an immediate email detailing next steps, like when the next gathering will be, what to expect, how to prepare, where to go, and so on. Any additional information, like joining a WhatsApp List or Facebook Group, should be included in this email as well.

3 STEP THREE

GATHERING PLACE

In general, face-to-face interactions are the most valuable way to connect in a meaningful way. Thankfully, video conferencing technology has come a long way. Even if a participant is initially uncomfortable turning on their camera, seeing their leader and other participants will help them to feel more personally connected. We have tested countless video conferencing platforms and we continue to come back to **Zoom** every time. You can often share one account as long as groups are not meeting at the same time, so you will likely need multiple admin accounts. There is also a 50 percent discount available to nonprofits through **TechSoup**.

4 STEP FOUR

CURRICULUM

This is probably where we have been most excited in the past few years as curriculum is so much more readily accessible. Less than 20 years ago, churches had to buy tape sets and check them out in intervals to different small groups, which forced some groups to have to wait for others to complete a certain study. Today, **RightNow Media** gives your whole congregation access to thousands of video curriculum options. Even if your church doesn't currently have a RightNow Media subscription, they have generously made a limited library available for free during this time. We can't recommend this resource enough as they have made it incredibly affordable for all churches to be able to access their vast library of content at a fraction of the cost of traditional church curriculum.

If we could offer a tip for how to consume curriculum in these online groups: Have each participant watch the video content prior to the group gathering. Historically, most groups have watched the video(s) during their group time. They did so because they couldn't pass out tapes or DVDs to every member of the group. Since RightNow Media is available to every participant, each person can easily watch the curriculum before the group gathering, which will maximize your time for conversation rather than having to view a video everyone can easily watch on their own.

5 STEP FIVE

COMMUNITY

Effective online small groups don't just connect for one hour a week—they stay connected all the time. Every online small group should have a Private or Secret Facebook Group in order to share life throughout the week through highlights, prayer requests, random conversations, and so on. Having an online community platform will enhance your online small group significantly.

6 STEP SIX

MEASURE EFFECTIVENESS

Just like everything else in your church, you need to measure the effectiveness of your groups through the weekly attendance of their video gatherings, which is the core connecting place for your online groups. This is where **GroupVitals** comes back into play as they make it so easy for group leaders to post their attendance numbers on a weekly basis.

We hope this has been helpful for your church to quickly set up online small groups in this unique season. If you have any questions at all, or if we can help in any way, please don't hesitate to reach out.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP



"I'm thrilled that God has assembled some of the brightest, most experienced and most forward-thinking talent here at D+C to serve the local church. It is our passion to take the best tools available and use them to reach communities and make disciples through your church ministry."

+ Rick Dunham, *Founder / CEO*



Trent Dunham, *President*

Trent began as a youth pastor, but for over 15 years he has been a recognized expert in integrated marketing, fundraising, online media, broadcast ministry and communications. As President of Dunham+Company, he provides trusted counsel to some of the world's most prominent Christian leaders and their organizations, helping to bring current best practice strategy to their Great Commission vision.



Nils Smith, *Chief Strategist, Social Media + Innovation*

While on staff at one of the largest and fastest growing churches in the country, Nils built an online church platform that now reaches over 12,000 people in 400 cities each week. He is the author of *The Social Media Guide for Ministry* and is an itinerant speaker around the nation on the topic.



Dan Sumpter, *Chief Creative Officer*

Dan began as a worship pastor and would go on to spend nearly 15 years serving in various leadership and executive roles at churches of 3,000 – 13,000 people. Dan has worked as a communications and creative directors, serving local churches, church planting organizations, broadcast ministries and conferences.



Randal Taylor, *Chief Strategist, Radio + Television*

With his background in local church ministry, Randal has provided strategic leadership and practical insight to churches and ministries who use broadcast media. Because of his extensive resume in the industry and network of relationships, he is able to grow their reach, maximize their budget and multiply their impact.



Casey Helmick, *Chief Strategist*

Casey started as the marketing manager for Samaritan's Purse. He also helmed the digital brand development for one of the largest Christian broadcast ministries in the country. He is also deeply invested in podcasts – owning a podcast production company focused on reaching the next generation.



Danielle Rice, *Director of Data + Analytics*

Danielle started her career by strategizing point-of-sale concept-creation marketing projects in the for-profit sector. She is passionate about the data behind human interaction and continually stays informed of for-profit trends and best practices to deliver results. She has also served as communications director in her local church and continues to volunteer in that area.



Bethany Cranfield, *Director of Strategic Relationships*

Bethany is responsible for driving new business efforts and building relationships with like-minded organizations. She is an account manager for a portfolio of clients with whom she maintains strong relationships to ensure the accurate and timely execution of strategy. Her husband was a pastor for many years and she is a frequent worship leader at her local church.

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