Imagine that you are sitting on your local church board and that the agenda item under discussion is: Planning for the Upcoming Week of Prayer. Like any church board, this one is made up of a variety of different personalities, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. At one end of the table sits the treasurer who tightly guards the purse strings. At the other end of the table is the guy with the big ideas, which often cost a lot of money. Next to him sits a young lady who is a professional at social media. A retired events coordinator sits next to her, always reminding the group to plan ahead.

The chairman solicits suggestions from the group. The events coordinator doesn’t waste a second: “We need a good upmarket venue with ample and safe parking.” The treasurer interjects, “I don’t think we have the budget for that.”
“We cannot use a local speaker, we need to fly in a well known speaker that will attract the crowds,” says the guy with the big ideas. Once again, a word of caution from the treasurer: “That means we will have to pay for his air ticket and accommodation in a hotel for the duration of the event.” The social media girl can’t wait to share her ideas, “We need top-class marketing: advertising in the local newspaper, bill boards along the highways, posters, and of course we need to make use of social media—Twitter, Facebook, and Google+.”

“We also need two huge video screens, a powerful projector, and good sound system,” adds the ideas man.

“This is going to cost a lot of money,” groans the treasurer, profoundly.

“One thing is for sure,” you think, “This Church Board meeting isn’t going to end early tonight! Will we ever find a solution?”

In 2008 I met a young IT professional from Zimbabwe. Thembinkosi Moyo had first worked at the Zimbabwe Union and then later for Solusi University. Thembi loves any kind of electronic gadget and constantly searches for new open source software and ways to use social media for evangelism. Being an avid Facebook user, he had the bright idea of running an E-Week of Prayer on Facebook in August 2009. He was amazed at the results of this simple yet profound idea.

He approached two pastors and asked them each to write a short daily sermon. This sermon was not to be longer than one letter-sized page. The reason for this is that most people in Africa do not access the Internet on computers, but rather on their mobile phones. The messages had to be short so that they could easily be read on mobile phone screens.

Thembi would post one sermon in the morning and one sermon in the evening on the FB Group page. This proved to be very effective for reaching members of the group in all time zones. A member of the Facebook group in Africa could read the evening sermon and the next morning a member in North America could read the same sermon, comment, and share. The group growth was exponential as people invited their Facebook friends to join and their friends invited their friends. Soon more than a thousand people were participating in the e-week of prayer. Some people were requesting prayer, others had pertinent questions to ask. Thembi would answer these as best he could and also share links to Bible correspondence school websites.

One young expatriate in Kazakhstan wrote on Facebook, “After living here for three and a half years, this week of prayer is the biggest blessing I have ever received! Praise the Lord for that, and pray for me as I try to share this message with the millions of Muslims in this country.”

—David Henry at the NAD Media Summit, May 2011

1. Two pastors wrote short sermons—less than A4 (letter size) page
2. Exponential growth as friends invited friends, invited friends
3. Post 2 messages per day—one in morning and one in evening
4. The group is still growing—currently around 1000 members.
"I want this week to be the beginning of wonders in my life. Always help me to pray, I don’t want to be a sinner again and to have a love like the one Jesus has for us.”

“Lovable Lindie” wrote, “The messages are really uplifting my spiritual life and it’s indeed a blessing in my life.”

Arthur Matshameko shared these thoughts: “I don’t know where you came from but keep the good Scripture coming. The teachings make me reflect a lot on my life and yes, I realize that a lot of times we take for granted what our Lord really is to us. Thank you very much.”

After the week of prayer, the group kept going and today there are still over 1,000 members.

The members of this Facebook group regularly interact, pray for each other, encourage each other in times of difficulty, and share thoughts and experiences.

Best of all? There were no venues to rent, no audio visual equipment to set up, no advertising or marketing costs. Speakers did not have to leave their families to go to another city and stay in a hotel for a week. Attendees didn’t have to travel to the venue and could participate whenever it suited them. The E-Week of Prayer cost absolutely nothing, just time, time donated by a young man from Zimbabwe who cared about his fellow Facebook users. Another advantage—no disagreement on the church board. The last report was that the treasurer still has a broad smile.

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**Media Training 101**

By Sally Stewart (John Wiley & Sons)

Media Training 101 is an in-depth guide to handling the news media, written by a seasoned journalist and public relations professional. Sally Stewart leads you through every step in developing a communications blueprint and a strategic public relations plan to support it. She shows you how to communicate effectively with the media in any given circumstance and how to control the way your organization is portrayed in the media.

Available from AdventSource at www.adventsource.org or 800-328-0525, Catalog #272045.
Eight Ground Rules For Working With Reporters

By Brad Phillips

One of our recent media training clients told me he refuses to speak with reporters unless they give him approval of the story before it runs.

Another told me her boss surreptitiously tape records interviews with the media in case the reporter “screws” him.

I hear those types of stories more often than you’d think, so today, I’m going to enumerate eight important ground rules you need to know when working with reporters.

1. Don’t Go Off-The-Record: Journalists don’t agree on what the term off-the-record means.

   One survey found that even journalists working for the same news organization had widely divergent views of what the term actually meant. If journalists themselves can’t agree on the definition, you’re going to get in trouble if you rely on the term to forge an agreement with a reporter. So banish it from your vocabulary entirely.

2. Never Say No Comment: There is no phrase more damning in a spokesperson’s lexicon than “no comment.” The public regards a person who utters those words the same way they view a person who shouts “I did it!” into a megaphone in a crowded park. That doesn’t mean you have to tell a reporter everything, but it means that you should use the technique of commenting without commenting.

   To read the rest of the story, go to http://www.mrmediatraining.com/index.php/2011/05/12/8-ground-rules-when-working-with-reporters/


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