Embrace the Smartphone

Your annual conference just wrapped up, and by most accounts, you’d call it a success. Key industry speakers and ministers delivered relevant information produced for high-impact and well-attended general sessions. The conference agenda was packed with educational workshops and worship sessions. Then, you read the feedback surveys: “Too much to select from.” “No time for networking.” “Uninspiring.” Wait, what happened?

Today, the issue isn’t the content of the conference. It’s the delivery. Your attendees, especially at youth events, are tech savvy and they’re demanding a fresh approach. Audiences want to be engaged, not addressed. More than half of all mobile users have smartphones, and if your church or organization skews younger, the number rises higher: 72 percent of consumers in Generation Y own a smartphone, according to Forrester. If you’ve been toying with the idea of integrating smartphone engagement into your events, now is the time. Build a plan, take it to the board and make the case that accommodating today’s smartphone users will create a better meeting. Here are a few things you could build into your next event to increase smartphone user engagement:

Conference Social Networks

Build a proprietary social network hub through Facebook or a service such as iMeet. This encourages attendees to connect with others who will be attending the conference as well as those within your organization.

Mobile Apps

Mobile apps can turn events into interactive and engaging experiences. Companies such as Gather Digital or
QuickMobile can create customized apps for your events. With an event mobile app, you can:

- Provide key information, including the conference agenda, bios on keynote speakers, and details about workshop presenters.
- Allow each attendee to create a customized schedule by selecting sessions they want to attend.
- Help attendees network and send meeting requests to each other or create their own profiles to support networking opportunities.
- Link event sessions to location maps such as Google Maps using smartphone GPS.
- Integrate social networking via Twitter or Facebook. You also can tie in a custom social networking hub created for the event.
- Get immediate feedback for each conference session as soon as it concludes.

**Tech-Savvy Speakers**

To be successful, everyone needs to be on board. That means you need to find and recruit speakers comfortable integrating smartphones into their sessions. They can use text-to-screen technology such as iWall, which allows attendees to engage with the content from the speaker, ask questions, and essentially become part of the program by texting comments and questions that appear on a large screen. For a more basic approach, set up a dedicated phone number to be used as a request line so attendees can text specific questions to the presenter.

**Mobile Contests**

Every smartphone has a camera. Develop a contest where attendees send in conference photos via text to a dedicated number. The photos are then uploaded and shared at the end of the conference. Let attendees judge the photos and award prizes for the funniest, most creative, most inspirational, etc.

**Games**

Create a game similar to a treasure hunt sending clues via text with some of the tasks involving the smartphone to find out the answer.

**QR Codes**

These tiny mobile codes are popping up on everything from print advertisements to the side of city buses, but they make a lot of sense at events. You can use QR codes to link to social media, allowing attendees to automatically post photos to their Facebook pages or send information out on their LinkedIn pages. You can also place QR codes on the signage outside workshops. When users scan it, they receive the workshop’s presentation, speaker bio, link to the workshop survey, or access to a LinkedIn group on the workshop topic.

The name of the game for today’s religious organizations is engagement. When you’re able to engage members throughout the year and during live events, you boost membership and retention. Smartphones are not going anywhere. It’s time to use them to your advantage.

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Article originally published in Rejuvenate magazine, June/July 2013 and was written by Amita Patel, CHSP, founder and president of Pillow Mint Partners, based in Southern California.

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### 2013 SAC Awards

Students and professionals are invited to enter work for more than 30 awards from the Society of Adventist Communicators in corporate communication, new media, print, broadcast, graphic design, and marketing/public relations. Information on specific categories can be found at http://www.adventistcommunicator.org/article/51/accreditation/sac-awards.

**How to enter**

1. Choose your best material created between July 2012 and June 2013.
2. Complete an entry form for EACH chosen entry, indicating category name and number. There is no limit on entries.
3. Submit three (3) published or produced samples stapled or binder clipped to EACH entry form. Samples will not be returned.
4. Send completed electronic entries and links to: george.johnson@nad.adventist.org.
5. Mail completed print, DVD, or project entries to: SAC AWARD ENTRY 2013 Attn. George Johnson Jr., 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.
6. Entry deadline is August 26, 2013.
TechTalk: Digital Disciples

Times have changed, if you were a public speaker in the 19th or early 20th century and someone in the audience was not keeping eye contact and was focused on something other than the speaker, you would think the subject matter was boring or the participant was not interested or engaged. However, in the 21st century it is often just the opposite. People now are using their digital devices to google information, fact check, and share content from the presenter.

The modern public speaker should understand that there is an audience within the audience to which he or she speaks or presents. Each person in attendance who is engaged in social media has an audience to which they speak, communicate, and share. It makes all the sense in the world for the modern speaker to realize and embrace this fact. This is a modern way to achieve what Jabez asked for, enlarging of his territory. (1 Chronicles 4:10)

Churches should embrace and encourage the digital disciples who utilize technology to spread the gospel to their audiences through social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and social cam. This is an effective way to reach out to those who are not present.

Successful Methods

▶ Use a hashtag for the event. i.e. #practicingcommunicating
▶ Give concise points that are easy to remember
▶ Summarize the main thought in 140 characters or less
▶ Take/show short videos of specific moments or a post-interview with a participant

Cautions

Remember, the purpose is to share the blessing or information with friends, not to compete or try to out-do or shine someone else. You do not want the acknowledgement to overshadow the goal. It would be very easy for it to become a competition or a race to be noted as the church that does this and miss the reason for doing so.

And this gospel shall be preached in all the world … digital disciples are one method to hasten the Lord’s coming.

By Bryant Taylor, pastor and communication director who lives at the intersection of ministry and technology.

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Journalism Patterns

Ansel Oliver

Publishing is teaching. Top news agencies teach you how well you need to write to work for them. This article shows you how to identify patterns within journalism. Knowing patterns and then using them—or breaking them intelligently—will sharpen your writing and better keep the attention of readers. Following are tips on writing and promoting your talent in order to get published. (Tip: start from the beginning at August, 2011, and work your way back).

Write about other people, not just yourself

I’m often told that I should consider a specific college student or a recent graduate as a potential candidate for a reporter, usually from a well-meaning relative of that person. Upon further investigation, I find that while they are a good writer, they have only written about themselves—their own opinions, their own devotional thoughts, their own worship essays, things about history that interest them, a mission trip they went on, their own first triathlon, me, me, me, etc.

Journalism is about OTHER PEOPLE. Tell the reader someone else’s story. Ask 10 people what you should write about and then choose one of those topics.

Show me some published clips of news and features that a small city newspaper would run

I remember an editor explaining to me why she only advertised employment openings for reporters on journalismjobs.com and not in her own newspaper. “If I do that, we’ll get people calling up, ‘oh I’ve always wanted to be a reporter, and I write poetry, I journal daily ...”

If you’re in college, then do what you can to dominate your campus newspaper. Make yourself the “go-to” reporter. Become the best you can there. Serve others and your editor.

Then find the nearest small-town paper, go in and show them a bunch of your clips, and offer your services as a freelance writer. Don’t worry about the pitiful payment. What you’re after are published clips. If you’re good, the money will come later.

Do you see where this is heading? Once you can dominate larger and larger newsrooms, you just might find yourself at a major market daily. You work your way up. As you seek to step up to each new level, your goal is to get published clips—initially they’re worth more than money.

So to summarize, serve your editor by making yourself the go-to person. Write stories so that people in the community (campus) will recognize themselves and others they know.

None of this will happen if you only write about yourself.