

ELEVEN EMBARRASSING MISTAKES ABOUT DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TO AVOID



Mistakes aren't all bad. No one wants to make a mistake, but truthfully, you can't do something for the first time—or even the first few times—and expect to be great at it. And just to be clear, I've made every one of these.

1. Operating without a plan. You can't orchestrate meaningful experiences and “wing it.” Sorry.
2. Buying followers on social media. You may think this is a good idea, but it's not.
3. Communicating the same message to everyone, in the same way, and on every platform. In just about every other context, this is called “spam.”
4. Not responding to comments and threads. If you give people an opportunity to respond, plan for someone to review and respond.
5. Not personalizing content. Personalization in digital communication used to be difficult. Not now. Don't start your emails with “Dear Friend.” If you do, you've already lost.
6. Making it all about you. Your digital communication channels are not there to amplify and cascade your announcements. They are opportunities to engage people right where they are.
7. Linking to content that is behind a soft wall. As people show interest, you can invite them to register on your site. But asking people to sign up to read any article on your site is like asking someone to fill out a questionnaire before a first date. That's just weird.
8. Not coordinating in-person and digital communications to make the recipient feel like you know them. It's not about what you want to say. Rather, it's about where they need to take their next step.
9. Talking about things that don't matter to anyone but you. While it may be top of mind for you, people want to answer their questions, overcome their challenges, and solve their problems. As you are able to do that, you will gain their trust.
10. Not using technology and data to measure interactions both in aggregate and in isolation of each other. Look at the whole person - not just a single campaign. Observe their behavior and use that to predict their next step.
11. Sending only text-based communication. It's the 21st century! If you're not using personalized video, you'll probably just be ignored. And don't underestimate a handwritten note, either.

The times when I've made the most mistakes about digital engagement can all be traced back to when I confused what was interesting, relevant, and helpful to me as being the same for others. If behavioural economics has taught me anything, it's that my intuition about what I think is probable is likely not consistent with reality. It's not about your personal preferences. It's about connecting with real people in multiple ways, and providing a relentless commitment to bridge their present to a more authentic experience with the Gospel.

I've created a free assessment that walks you through 6 specific areas that are critical to online ministry. I encourage you to check it out. It only takes 3 minutes and then use the results to help build on your plans for 2023. (Link: www.alanvgeorge.com)

About the author



Alan was on staff at Life. Church for almost 10 years, serving primarily as the Church Online Pastor. Life. Church is based in Oklahoma, United States, and is a multi-site church that founded the You Version Bible App. Life. Church Online was founded in 2006 and today reaches people from countries all over the world through nearly 100 digital church services weekly, led by a global volunteer team from over 55 different countries. Alan strongly believes in leveraging technology to make the truth of Christ accessible to all people groups, regardless of distance, language, and cultural barriers. Currently, he partners with churches and leaders and helps in areas like leadership development, team dynamics, and strategic thinking. For additional resources, visit www.alanvgeorge.com