

Digital Outreach: Learning to Do Many Things Well

By **KURT VON DER LINDEN**

Kurt von der Linden is the director of the digital evangelism ministry of Indopartners. He has an M.A. in Intercultural Studies from Columbia International University and has been working to reach the people of SE Asia for nearly 10 years.

Steve Jobs is famous for saying,
“Do not try to do everything.
Do one thing well.”

I agree with that principle for many things in life, including ministry. Great feats can be accomplished when a person focuses their effort on one thing. However, not all ministries have that luxury. Those of us involved in digital evangelism are being forced to diversify our efforts and learn to do many things well.

What Is Digital Evangelism?

For those not yet familiar with the term, digital evangelism is simply sharing the Gospel with people through the use of various digital platforms. A few of these include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, TikTok, websites, smartphone apps, and messaging applications. Indopartners is using all of these platforms to share the Gospel with millions of unreached people in Southeast Asia.



The Power of Digital Evangelism

Digital outreach has tremendous potential. It can be used to share the Gospel with people of any age, living just about anywhere, any time of day or night. Through digital evangelism, we can now share the Gospel with as many people in one day as one missionary can in 10 years.

Digital ministry is strategic everywhere, but especially for places like the country we serve in in SE Asia. This country has thousands of inhabited islands and is very spread out. However, nearly every island can now be reached with the truth.

A former missionary now involved in our organization once had the desire to reach people from an Unreached People Group in a small village. Many years ago, he attempted to evangelize the people there. But, since he was a Westerner, he was chased out of the village. Several months ago, a person from that people group sent an online message to our staff saying they wanted to meet with a Christian to learn about Jesus!

Challenges in Digital Ministry

While digital evangelism has amazing power, it also has its challenges. One difficulty is keeping up with ever-changing technology. New platforms are regularly emerging, and existing platforms are constantly changing. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other platforms are updating every day. It takes time to stay up-to-date on all the changes.

Another obstacle digital ministries face is regulation from governments and organizations. Many countries now have their own rules about what is and what is not allowed. This includes the collection of data and what is permitted to be advertised. Governments are able to permanently block accounts that don't comply with their policies.

A third challenge is the number of platforms and channels available for people to use. There are about 10–12 primary social media platforms throughout the world, but there are easily over 100 available. Our time and resources are limited, which means we cannot possibly learn them all.



Why Diversification is Necessary

Based on the three reasons presented, we believe it is necessary to diversify digital-outreach efforts. By diversify, I mean to create multiple accounts on various channels. Creating one website, Facebook page, TikTok account, or YouTube account is risky and very limiting. As they say, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”

For example, imagine pouring thousands of hours and dollars into a TikTok account only to wake up one day to find that TikTok is now banned in your country. That happened in India at the beginning of 2023. There were over 200 million active TikTok users in India, but the government decided to ban the application due to perceived security risks.

There have been several digital ministries that have focused their entire efforts on Facebook using a single account. One day they may open their account and discover it has been blocked, and they cannot get it restored. They have to start from scratch.

Diversification is especially important when using social media platforms because they are considered “rented space.” We can easily be asked to leave because we do not own the channel. This is why it is a good idea to have one’s own website, but even that can be blocked.

Diversification not only allows us to reach more people but it also gives you backup options in case the unexpected happens.

Case Study:

Diversification Efforts in Southeast Asia

So, what does this look like practically? Indopartners has worked hard to diversify our digital-outreach efforts in Southeast Asia. We are currently using the following channels for outreach:

- 15 Facebook pages
- 8 websites
- 8 Google and Facebook ad accounts
- 4 YouTube channels
- 3 Instagram accounts
- 2 Twitter accounts
- 2 TikTok accounts
- 1 Pinterest account

While it can be challenging to maintain all of these accounts, it also allows us to reach more people with the Gospel. And, if one of the accounts gets shut down, our ministry is easily able to continue sharing the Gospel through other channels.

Diversification not only allows us to reach more people but it also gives you backup options in case the unexpected happens.

Several years ago, our main website was blocked by most of the major internet providers in a country. Our outreach efforts

took a hit for a few months, but we were still able to share the Good News because we had other websites and various social media accounts. We also have had multiple Facebook accounts blocked, but it never really slowed outreach efforts because we could turn elsewhere.

This diversification strategy is important for digital advertising accounts as well. Advertising is essential to digital evangelism efforts as it allows ministries to get the truth to people who are seeking. Indopartners has created multiple Google and Facebook advertising

accounts in the event that one is blocked. We also use what are called native ads as a third way of promoting our evangelistic content.

As a result, in 2022 alone, our evangelistic articles and videos were viewed 30 million times! And over 90,000 people sent us direct messages asking questions and looking for hope.

Diversify Your Digital Outreach

We highly recommend you consider including digital evangelism in your outreach efforts if you are not currently using it. It's good to start simple with one or two platforms. But, once you feel like you can handle that, we encourage you to use more channels so all your eggs are not in only one basket.

For those of you already using digital evangelism, we strongly encourage you to diversify your efforts by creating multiple accounts on various platforms. This will help protect your work in case the unexpected happens.

We need to be *wise as serpents and innocent as doves* (Matt. 10:16), but ultimately, we need to trust God with all of our efforts. He is the one who protects us, gives us wisdom, and brings the fruit. May God bless your efforts in reaching the unreached! 🙏

