

Seth Godin Delivers 8 Key Insights for Church Leaders

[Seth Godin](#) is an American author, entrepreneur, marketer and public speaker. Over the years I've been inspired, challenged and shaped by Seth's approach to communications and marketing. **It was a dream come true to have an extended time with him ...** listening to what he is currently thinking about these topics. This post could have been 88 insights from Seth, but I've tried to boil it down to just a handful that I think are the most salient for church leaders today.

"People who settle are exposing themselves to huge risks."

- Seth commented that in a hyperlinked global culture choosing the "safe" path — the path of working for the industrial giants of the past — is risky. We need to be innovating or attempting something new to stay ahead in today's culture. As a leader, am I choosing the "safe" path defined by the previous generation or am I doing whatever it takes to move forward?
- Take Away: How can churches take risks to impact our culture? What risks should you take this month to move your ministry forward?

"Gutenberg launched the printing press when 96% of the people in Europe were illiterate."

- Let this fact sink in for a minute: Gutenberg built a technology to solve a problem no one knew they had. If we're going to reach people no other church is reaching, we have to do things that no one else is doing. What does extravagant innovation look like at your church? Why don't churches have R&D departments devoted to pushing the envelope and making an impact in our culture?
- Take Away: What are we doing that no one else is doing to reach people no one else is reaching?

"We live in a world where people pay real money to raise invisible sheep!"

- Seth used [FarmVille](#), the online social media game where people "farm" virtual plots of land, as an example of an unpredictable outcome of today's culture and market. Culture is shifting all around us ... people are interacting in ways that weren't conceived of 5 years ago ... and we can't dream of where we'll be in another 5 years. I've always been struck by the fact that we overestimate how rapidly technology will change, but underestimate how quickly technological changes impact our society.
- Take Away: How are you staying an active learner to tap into where our culture is headed?

"If you can get someone to change ... you are making art."

- A driving force behind Seth's dialog was how we need to do things ... make things ... serve people ... in a way that changes people. I was struck that this marketplace leader

was talking about life change as an outcome. As church leaders, do we think enough about the “change” we’re shooting for with our programs and services?

- Take Away: What would happen if you started clearly articulating goals for how you want people to change with every interaction with your church?

“Anyone with a laptop is one click away from anyone else with a laptop.”

- The great outcome of the information technology revolution isn’t that we have access to unlimited amounts of data ... it’s that we have unlimited access to people. Technology is about enabling relationships. At its core, church is about connecting people.
- Take Away: How can we leverage technology to bring people together in our community?

“Treat different people ... differently.”

- One of Seth’s core messages was that today’s successful organizations market to smaller niches rather than the masses. The “television industrial complex” is dead. Stop trying to think about the global dominant culture and start trying to reach smaller circles. This is a challenge for church leaders, because we are largely focused on gathering larger crowds. We celebrate church leaders who are able to market themselves to as broad a demographic as possible. Are we rowing our boats in the wrong direction? Is the future about niche-ministries like [Game Church](#) and the [house church movement](#)?
- Take Away: When was the last time your leadership team talked about what “niche” you are trying to reach?

“You are yelling at people who think they have a problem that you can’t solve ...”

- Seth implored people to stop trying to “create the need” in people through marketing, and instead to find people with a problem and help them solve it. Marketing has traditionally attempted to foster discontent in an area and then introduce a product to deliver the solution. People have stopped listening to that sort of advertising ... they see right through it. They need someone to help solve the problems they actually have.
- Take Away: Are we solving problems that our people perceive they have? Or are we trying to convince them that they have the problem we want to solve?

“After 100 years of poking people ... some stuff stopped working so well.”

- Seth had some comical old and odd advertisements for us to check out, like [babies wrapped in plastic](#) ... [starting drinking cola young](#) ... [crazy sexist stuff](#) ... and [doctors preferring Camels](#)! Although these ads get laughs today, they also point to a cultural shift and a growing suspicion of marketing. People are sick of all the targeting, segmenting and marketing. Our role in communications today is to connect people together and share experiences, not to “sell” them on what we have in the warehouse.
- Take Away: What are we advertising at our churches today that we’re probably going to laugh at 5 years from now? (Be honest!) Should we stop it now to save ourselves embarrassment in the future?

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