

Technology, Leadership and Their Influence on Ministry

We are about three months into a new year – new goals, new ideas, new plans. But for some, there are old problems hanging around like questions about technology. Decisions about church technology are usually put off until something breaks or fails regularly. At that point, the decision about what to do next is often delegated to someone who understands tech lingo rather than someone who knows how technology actually needs to help people accomplish the mission of the church.

Technology can have more of an impact than you initially think...

...it can be seen as a commodity like the paper in your copier or it can be seen as a powerful tool that empowers people and supports ministry processes.

Let's unpack that statement and look at some of the ways technology can give you a way to measure and see that you are moving people through a path to deeper engagement with your church and in their walk with Christ.

What if using technology doesn't feel natural to me?

This is a great starting place. Steve Caton in [Getting Disciple Making Right](#) hit the nail on the head when he said that many called into ministry, "*...are probably not naturally drawn to numbers,...data analysis and complex algorithms.*" Technology isn't something you necessarily anticipated being an integral part of an effective ministry.

You spend a great deal of time preparing for such things as pastoral counseling, preaching, education strategy, and effective leadership. There are very few seminary classes on technology, especially how to use technology to make better ministry decisions.

But just because using technology might not come naturally to you doesn't mean it can't easily become one of the most beneficial tools for improving your ministry.

So how do we leverage it even when it doesn't feel natural? Here are a few ideas:

- Communicate your vision. Technology used in the absence of a clear vision for success is almost a complete waste of time.
- Design good process. Before you implement any software, review the ministry process you hope it will support. Does it still work? Does everyone know their role? Do you hold people accountable?
- Develop ministry opportunities for those gifted with technology. If your church struggles to use social media, create a volunteer team of people with experience to help.
- Celebrate people who are good with technology just as much as you celebrate any other volunteer in your church.
- Create a specific ministry in your church to connect generations. Creating a ministry opportunity for younger members of your church to show older members how to use

technology to stay connected with family or benefit from tools they're interested in is a great way to develop the intergenerational community that every church needs. It can also be equally beneficial for the younger generation to learn skills (construction, repair, sewing, baking, etc.) from the older generation.

Your [church management software](#) is more than a database.

So since much of this might not come naturally to you, it is understandably easy to get into the habit of thinking of your [church management software](#) as just a database in which to keep track of attendance and giving. Moving beyond this thinking is a great step to seeing your church management software as something that allows you to see God's hand in and through your ministry.

How can that begin to happen?

Two steps can be a great leap forward in moving beyond simply seeing numbers and seeing ways to continue ministry, improve ministry, and grow to be more effective in growing disciples.

We all have systems and processes that we use to do church (i.e., engage people, equip people, and multiply disciples). Communicating with small groups, keeping attendance in children's ministry, and placing volunteers are examples of common systems.

The first step in allowing your [church management software](#) to deepen engagement is to first evaluate your processes for these ministries. Once you've taken a close look at your processes and decided which of those are effective, then look for technology that is going to support those systems, processes and the people who really drive your church. The technology should fit your effective processes – not the other way around.

Second, look for technology that is going to be usable by a wide variety of people. The more people who can use the technology, the greater and richer the data becomes, thereby giving you a richer resource from which to determine your continued efficacy, new directions you should take, and what systems might need changing.

How can I connect more effectively with different types of church members?

You're growing to be comfortable with the idea of using technology in ministry. You've taken a close look at your church's systems for effective ministry and chosen a church management system that supports those processes. So how can you use all this new information and technology to increase your church's ministry with the various people who walk through your doors?

Certainly, ministry would be easy if everyone in your church understood your church's vision and shared the same passion for reaching others. Unfortunately, that will probably never be the case. Will Mancini has identified four different types of members who make up every church. Each member has a different level of understanding of the vision of the church and their role in accomplishing it.

- These are people that understand the vision of your church and play an important role in achieving it.
- These are people who understand where your church wants to go, but haven't taken an active role in make it happen.
- These are people who might be actively involved but don't have a clear understanding of where your church is headed. Therefore, they end up hijacking whatever ministry they're involved with.
- These are people who understand neither the vision of your church nor why they are important.

Technology can play a huge role in helping you keep your 'crew' energized and moving other types of church members toward becoming actively engaged church members.

- Technology helps you really 'know' your crew. It's important to develop a clear portrait of your key volunteers. Whether it's a volunteer who's been serving at your church for the past 15 years or a first-time giver, your ability to make your 'crew members' feel appreciated depends on how much you know.
- Technology helps you activate passengers. Instead of relying on the same volunteers or donors time and time again, technology allows church leaders to embrace the decentralized shift our culture has made. Technology allows you to reach church members where they are, communicate with them effectively, and connect them with a ministry that aligns with their skills and passions.
- Technology helps you convert pirates. Most of the time, people who hijack ministries do so because they aren't properly equipped. Before anyone starts serving in your ministry, they need to be equipped with supporting relationships, biblical teaching, encouragement, support, accountability, a sense of belonging, and a sense of purpose.
- Technology helps you invite stowaways to become passengers. There is a reason some churches are full of spectators. Churches which value connections understand that life change happens when you help your church members become the ministry, which only happens when you effectively help people engage with the culture and mission of your church.

We started out by saying technology can give you a way to measure and see that you are moving people through a path to deeper engagement with your church and in their walk with Christ. Here are 5 simple concepts that look at technology as a tool to increase engagement, equip more of your church body, and increase your disciple-making capabilities.

1. Technology can be used to help you remember what you know about people in your church, allowing you to connect more effectively with people.
2. Technology enables your churches to create numerous waves of momentum instead of getting stuck in an uncomfortable spot without a plan. Without thinking strategically about your technology, you miss the opportunity to record and analyze important data that illustrates the growth pattern of your congregation.
3. Thinking strategically about your technology gives you the opportunity to record and

analyze the important data that illustrates the growth pattern of your congregation.

4. Thinking strategically about your technology can have a significant impact on how well you are connecting with first-time guests and what you learn from those who don't return. People want to know they matter and feel a sense of belonging. Technology helps you avoid becoming a catch and release ministry.
5. Technology can improve the effectiveness of your small group ministries and depth of community. How can you expect authentic community and care to happen in the absence of accurate information?

Technology in the church can be so much more than it often is. Taking the time to be strategic with it won't be easy or fast but it's so worth it!

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