

The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk
to Your Inbox**



**How to Use Social Media
to Advance Generosity**



**The Digital Lane Social Media
Checklist and Suggested Action List**



**Can You Predict the
Future of Giving?**

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From My Desk to Your Inbox

Our goal is to help you build a culture of generosity in your church based on biblical principles. I hope you're finding this to be a helpful tool in doing so.

This week Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, continues his series on the various lanes of stewardship needed to build a culture of generosity with a post entitled **How to Use Social Media to Advance Generosity**.

In the Bonus Section, **you'll find practical advice on what not to do and what you should do regarding your social media presence.**

Can You Predict the Future of Giving? That question originated from an email from Rick Blythe, Mississippi Baptist's Director of Stewardship/Prayer Ministry. Mark turned that question into an article that gives helpful suggestions about how to estimate your future giving.

Remember, all past Journal posts can be found at: <https://stewardshipjournal.com/>.

For additional resources, visit: LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship.

I'm praying we'll see every Louisiana Baptist church fully resourced to do all God has put on your hearts!

Keep Looking Up,



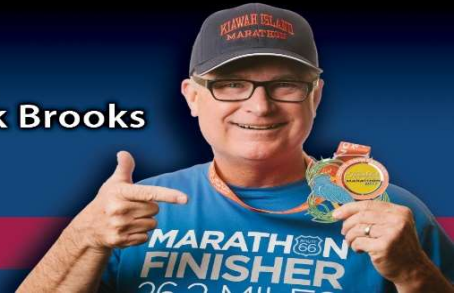
Dr. Steve How

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THE STEWARDSHIP COACH
REVERSING THE DECLINE IN GIVING

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Mark Brooks



How to Use Social Media to Advance Generosity



Should your church have a social media strategy for increasing generosity?

Consider these statistics:

- More than **half of the world** now uses social media (**62.3%**)
- **5.04 billion people around the world** now use social media, and **266 million new users have come online** within the last year.
- **The average daily time spent using social media is 2h 23m.**¹

After reading these statistics, the answer to my question is yes! If we want to engage our communities, we must be on social media. This Coach is entitled ***How to Use Social Media to Advance Generosity***.

When it comes to increasing generosity through social media, here are what I call my Three A's of social media. I advise using social media to...

Raise Awareness of what your church is doing and will be doing. Start telling and showing the story of what you are attempting to raise funds for. You should post pictures of the ministry or mission endeavor that the donations will support. We are helping your people become aware of the need for which you will ask for donations. What do you want your donors to be aware of that might touch their hearts?

Call to Action in support of what your church is doing. Posting pictures with captions like, "Your generous gift now will enable us to _____. Please donate at..." Then put the URL link to your online giving page, making it easy for them to give immediately. What can your donors do right *now* to help make a difference?

Give Appreciation for the impact their gift made on the Kingdom of God. Take the time to report back on how the generosity of your members allowed you to meet the appeal's needs. Have pictures of the appeal's results. A simple text attached to those pictures says, in essence, "Thanks to your generosity, _____. Thank you, church!" Thanking your donors and showing them the results of their gifts with pictures sets the stage for more gifts.

What does this have to do with increasing giving? In my mind, social media is all about engagement that leads to giving. It's not about raising dollars but raising awareness. It allows you to tell your story by showing your story. A compelling story is the best way to raise dollars. One of my key mantras for raising funds is:

Get a story, work your story, tell your story and people will give to support your story!

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Social media is one of the best ways to show and tell your story, and it's a crucial part of your Digital Lane strategy.

Check out my Bonus Section for more help and advice on using social media.

Start planning your social media strategy to increase awareness of stewardship's impact, and you will see an increase in giving!



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach

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OnlineGiving.org, the leading online giving processor in America, sponsors my writing. OG is owned and operated by committed Christians active in their local church. Find out more about their services at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/>. You can also read the blog post I wrote for them at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/blog>.

1. <http://smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/>

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Bonus Section

The Digital Lane Social Media Checklist and Suggested Action List

The following thoughts will help craft your social media strategy. I give you advice to avoid and advice to adhere to!

Avoid these Common Mistakes Churches Make in Social Media

1. **Not utilizing it at all.** If you want to reach your neighborhood, you will find them on social media.
2. **Setting it up and then leaving it.** Posts that are weeks or months old show a lack of interest.
3. **Making it all about the church.** Don't use social media to replace your newsletter or bulletin.
4. **Lack of strategy.** Don't just show up on social media. Have a strategy. What is your goal?
5. **Lacking a plan to implement the strategy.** Without a plan, you are planning to fail.

Key Pointers for Social Media Success—Here are some key points that will help you make your sites more effective.

- **Set it up!** - Use multiple social media platforms to get your message out. Multichannel is the new normal! Find out what platforms are used most predominantly by your members and guests. Don't try to be everywhere, be where your community is.
- **Message it out!** What are you attempting to communicate? Stay on point, and don't dilute your message.
- **Plan it out!** What are you trying to accomplish with each of your Social Media platforms? Write it down and work it! Link your social media posts with the calendar and flow of your church. Be creative!
- **Determine the right number of posts.** While never posting anything is wrong, so is continually posting stuff to the point that it is annoying. At a minimum, consider a daily post.
- **Drive people to your platform.** In all your communications, provide easy links to your social media sites. Then, make your social media sites worth visiting!
- **Engage with people.** Social Media strategies are different from web page strategies.
- **Show and tell!** Social Media lets you show missions and ministry in action. Post lots of pictures! Make sure you have proper clearance for all persons used in your posts.
- **Who owns it?** Make sure someone owns the plan. The best-laid plans are worthless unless someone owns it.
- **Review it!** Assess what works and what doesn't. Good social media strategies are works in progress.
- **Make the ask!** Show life change and periodically invite them to support that with a generous gift by providing a URL link to your giving page.

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Can You Predict the Future of Giving?

By Mark Brooks

Rick Blythe, the Director of Stewardship/Prayer Ministry for the Mississippi Baptists, sent me this question last week: “I have a consultation with a church next Monday, and they want me to address ways to estimate church giving for the next year.” I told Rick I would answer his question and write an article about my response. So, here goes!

Can you predict the future? That is essentially what the church is asking. No one can predict with 100% accuracy where any church’s giving will be for this year. However, now more than ever, churches can better predict their giving outcomes.

For twenty-five years, I have studied church giving patterns of many of the top 100 churches in size and churches running 100 in attendance. My consultation is driven largely by the data I draw from a client’s past giving. That data shows me past trends that may be either a blessing in the future or a curse. Data helps shape our financial strategies, ensuring that the money you need in July for Student Camp is in the bank when needed. Collecting data on past giving is crucial for any church serious about managing its financial future. What data should you be collecting?

Let’s start with the easy and the obvious. What is your weekly offering need? If you don’t know, stop reading this and find out, and don’t come back until you know the answer.

After establishing your base weekly need, the next marker you need to know is how giving matches up to your needs. Basically, you are asking, “Are we ahead or behind budget?” Let’s call that the Ahead/Behind Marker. So, right now, do you know if you are ahead or behind?

The Comparison Marker comes next. Again, this one is obvious. You want to compare your present giving trends with your past trends. I compare giving to last year, last quarter, and last month.

In other words, I am looking to see if giving is behind or ahead of where we were last year at the same time. How does our current yearly giving total compare to the same period of weeks of last year? Then I look at my last quarter compared to previous quarters and the same quarter as last year. I do the same with the months of the year.

Trends can be your friend. Wall Street has a saying that says, “The trend is your friend.” This means that trends help you plan better and make better decisions. The same is true in your comparison. You are looking not just to see if you are ahead or behind from previous years, quarters, etc., but to learn what the tides of giving are for your church.

For instance, you know that summer is a tougher giving time than November. Knowing your trends helps you better prepare for your spending and can help you predict future giving. Yet you must look a bit deeper. Let’s talk about...

Dollar Markers versus Donor Markers – If you are focused only on comparing the dollars of giving without comparing the donors that are giving you those dollars, you could be headed for disaster. The following are some of the major donor markers I would be looking at and comparing with previous years.

New Donors – You need to know immediately when someone gives to your church for the first time. You MUST have a first-time giving plan for responding to those donors. Why? You want to develop them into consistent givers.

Churn Rate—How many givers did you lose from the last year, and how many did you gain? A typical healthy church will see a 15% to 20% loss of donors each year. We call that the Churn Rate. Every church has a back door. You want to know that new givers are being added to offset the loss you will experience every year. You also want to find ways to ensure current donors do not become lapsed donors.

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First, the key to staying fully funded is minimizing your losses while gaining new donors. You minimize losses by working first to ensure members connect within your church. Multiple studies have shown that if people get involved in some aspect of your church, they will stay there longer. The recent Barna study found that 45% of Practicing Christians, defined as attending church at least once a month, are comfortable calling themselves generous.¹

50% Line – What percent of your donors give 50% of all that is given? In my over twenty years of financial analysis of hundreds of churches, I have found that, on average, around 15% of a church's donor base gives 50% of all that is given. This number will be key to whether you are fully funded this year. Also, in any potential capital campaign, this group will give as much as 90% of the total. You want to ensure this group stays highly engaged and connected with the vision driving your mission and ministry!

Over/Under – Here you want to know what percent of your giving comes from those over 60 years of age and what comes from those under 60 years of age. Our donor base is aging and knowing your Over/Under split shows you the work ahead to fill the void of your top donors retiring or passing on to Heaven.

These are some of the top markers that I look at when determining the health of a congregation. Some of the above are easy to track, and others are harder. The point is to *know* your numbers.

Why is this important? It keeps you from making mistakes in budgeting and spending. One of the classic reasons people give to any organization is they believe in the fiscal responsibility of how that institution handles money. The better you know your numbers, the better you manage your finances. Knowing your numbers ultimately helps you create a culture of generosity that will increase giving and givers!

I love data, but it is limited in estimating future giving. In his email to me, Rick shared that he has ten years of data from the church asking for an estimate of giving. He was astute enough to ask, "What other advice can you give me that will help them estimate giving for the coming year?" I responded that looking back at their 10-year giving history is certainly a start, but it's a look at history, not the future.

When I look at past data, I want to see if there are trends that are observable and thus require more probing. Numbers don't tell us the complete story but allow us to ask questions. So, lookbacks indicate growth or trouble, but we must probe for the reasons behind that growth or decline. So, again, having data is important, but it has limitations, especially when it comes to predicting future giving.

While no one can predict with 100% accuracy, let me share a strategy you can easily employ to improve your predictive ability.

Every client church I work with now receives half or more of its annual offering digitally. I've worked with churches that receive 90% digitally. This is our new normal. Based upon this, I have an answer for any church wanting to predict the future of its giving. The only real way to project future giving accurately is to track the church's online giving that is set up to be recurring. Let me illustrate.

Let's say you see 50% of all gifts come digitally. Then, let's say you see an average of about 25% of those gifts set up as recurring gifts. Thus, you know that 25% of recurring gifts will hit your offering plate in the coming months. As a stewardship consultant, that is a guaranteed 25% that I can build on.

What if recurring giving increased to greater percentages? This is one of the great values of automated giving: a better estimate of future giving, allowing you to better manage your finances. The other great value is that recurring giving will increase your revenue. Come July, when your members are on vacation; their offering will still hit your digital offering plate. I have found that increasing your automated giving is the best way to predict future giving. Knowing you have an almost guaranteed percentage of monthly gifts allows you to better plan for the future.

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I have one more recommendation. Use your online giving provider's data to help you project future giving. At [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org), we have worked hard to provide our clients with answers to questions like these. We can't predict the future with 100% accuracy, but we can give you a realistic view, which helps with budget planning and execution.

Today, with our platform, you can track your data in real-time. Our Dashboard instantly gives you information on key metrics, such as new donors, lapsed donors, and Future Scheduled Giving. These features allow you to notice trends quickly. Here is a post that shares more about this at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/blog>

Can we predict the future? No, but our platform can help you better estimate your future giving, which will help you better manage your finances.

1. <https://shop.barna.com/products/the-state-of-generosity-series-the-giving-landscape>