Quick Start Guide for Creating Online Content

Marshfield UMC

Preparation

- Watch LOTS of content at the platform you're considering. What is the culture there?

  - If you want to do short format content (instagram reels or TikTok, for example), watch lots of those videos. See what other churches are doing as well as other content creators. Get the feel for the culture of the platform.

  - If you want to do long format content (YouTube), get the feel for that. How do people interact with each other? What appeals to you? Check with the kinds of people you know who are most like the audience you want to reach. What do they watch? Watch that. For example, I found a lot of deep dive documentaries that attracted wide variety of people. I watched the comments and how the host handled the community they built.

- Figure out what you are passionate about adding to the online platform you've chosen. If you don't like doing it, that will come across. What does your church do well and how could you translate that to online?

  - Brainstorm ideas for content. The typical idea is to build a single channel with four pillars of content. For example, we have our weekly worship service, KenTalks, my Bible studies, and we're adding a monthly informal pastor's vlog.

  - Build a schedule. We post regularly in all our pillars of content so that people who come for one kind of content will get a steady stream of the kind they like and maybe feel inspired to check out the other types of content while they're waiting for the next thing they know they like.

- Find your team. Talk to people who are creative and/or tech savvy. Involve them in the process early on. You may have the perfect person to do your slides and b-roll sitting in the pew or a fantastic web user who could easily index your content for search engines so it gets more views. Discuss platforms with your web savvy members. Find out what platforms and content they watch. We've found that people who watch the platform we use love the chance to go behind the scenes and see how the videos they love are built.

Stage One Equipment

- Decent vlogging camera for quality video and audio capture.

  - A good smartphone, combined with a Gimbal, may be sufficient to start although purchasing a stand-alone camera that can be connected to equipment as the ministry grows is a smart move.

- Audio quality is at least as important as video quality. Many cameras have after market microphones that can increase the quality of audio capture.

- Besides quality audio and video capture, it is important to consider whether the people recording will be working alone. If so, it is vital to get a camera with a viewfinder that can be switched to a forward view so the person on camera can monitor their recording, framing, audio, etc. while filming.

- We recommend the Sony ZV-1 or ZV-E10 vlogging cameras. The DJI Osmo Pocket 3 is also a very interesting and popular option as well as very light and mobile.

- Basic three point lighting setup. There are lots of videos on YouTube about basic budget three point lighting setups for video.

  - It is very possible you have all the lights you need to get started.

  - The possibility of dimming the lights gets useful as you move forward, as cameras struggle with high levels of light and may need much lower lighting than we expect.

- Basic editing software, which is likely available to you for free with a little searching. iMovie (which comes free for Apple users) is quite handy.

  - Don't forget there are free digital editing software products as well as tons of YouTube videos about how to use digital editing software.

- Basic graphics/video library. We use Canva for a lot of our video and image edits, which eliminates concerns of copyright infringement.

  - Wikipedia Commons is a great free source for historical images. Each image contains information about proper citation for use.

Stage Two:

- Set up a semi-permanent location. Have a basic "set" or carefully curated background that shows who you are as a church, and set your equipment up to stay in that position. This will allow you to have a consistent look to your videos and make it easier to use your equipment.

  - Purchasing a tripod and a dummy battery/battery override for your camera will allow your camera to always be ready for video capture.

- Add in a teleprompter. The Neewer Teleprompter we purchased was one of our best investments. Not only does it make it easy to read from a transcript but it also hides the camera from the speaker, taking away a lot of the initial discomfort of being filmed as well as cutting down on editing time. It takes about 2 minutes for someone to learn to operate the remote.

  - This does require having an iPad or smartphone available for reflection.

- You will need a heavy duty tripod to handle the teleprompter apparatus and the camera while still being able to adjust the view.

Stage Three:

- Create a flexible set. We recommend hanging a roll of photograph background paper in a neutral color (we have white, gray, and black on a three tiered hanging system), and an RGB light that lets us recolor the background for different moods, types of content, and seasons of the church year.

- Consider adding a microphone to your camera to improve audio quality and maybe even a digital mini soundboard.

- Invest in better software/digital content libraries.

  • We eventually moved all our editors to Final Cut Pro, Apple's professional video editing software. Using pro software also allows the purchase or free use of plugins that let you further customize your content. We particularly like MotionVFX for plugins and for timelines that allow us to create commercial-type videos at a much reduced amount of time.

- We have paid subscriptions to churchmotiongraphics.com and epidemicsound.com and are considering content services such as ArtGrid and Artist to add a wider variety of content to our B-rolls.

If you have any questions, would like to see or use our online studio, or would like some help in transitioning more ministry online, please reach out to us at TheStreamsMUMC@gmail.com or call us at (417) 859-2472. Our online staff and volunteers would be glad to help.

Rev. Kim Polchow

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