



March 30, 2009

# Practical Tools

Vern Sanders

## Blogging Bits & Pieces

### Interesting concepts from the blogosphere

I know...I know...for some of you blogs are so "been there..." Yet, for the church, blogging is still somewhat of a cutting edge phenomenon. Our (traditional especially) congregations are still adapting to the internet, let alone aggregating through a blog reader (and if you didn't understand that sentence, stay tuned, maybe there is some help ahead...). Here at Creator, we're finding we're spending more time staying up with our favorite bloggers, and finding new ones to boot.

So this month, I want to pass along some bits and pieces from the blogosphere that may help you take "next steps" in your ministry--like the one I read somewhere, and seems to be the new "Emily Post" standard for differentiating yourself in today's frantic world: **Don't be rude, don't be boring, give to get.** Many of these ideas are from the business world, but look for the kernels of what is transportable to ministry.

===

Chief Conversation Officer

We've talked elsewhere about the concept of "Minister of Texting." Now, from the folks at [Duct Tape Marketing](#), comes the concept of the Chief Conversation officer...I've taken the liberty to change the terms to make it "church" relevant...

*"Markets are conversations - talk is cheap, silence is fatal" - from the cluetrain manifesto - Levine, Locke, Searls & Weinberger*



The statement above embodies for many the changed landscape of marketing. [Bigchurch] started to embrace this over the course of the last few years and now it's time for {Smallchurch} to aggressively do the same.

This year's next position for many small [churches] should be a conversation officer - someone in charge of the story.

That officer could be employed to create, curate and sometimes manipulate the conversations that must be coming from your [church]. In the broad sense the duties of this position should include

**Content** - this one is pretty simple - full fledged blogger, article publisher, white paper creator and education based marketing materials and webinar creator.

**Context** - this one is a little trickier, but your conversation officer should employ RSS technology to aggregate and filter the content and conversations going on in every online and offline corner and package it to make it more useful for your organization and your [potential worship attendees].

**Connection** - your CCO should be in charge of developing ways to include your [congregation] and partners in the building of your [ministry] for mutual benefit. Your CCO should be in charge of the conversations your [seekers] are having after they buy, as they decide to buy more and in the process of becoming a referral source.

**Community** - your conversations must eventually come together as community. You must facilitate conversation among your [seekers] and [congregants], introduce partners and find ways to co-create value. Intentionally hosting the conversation your [congregantss] are having with each other is a must.

The primary toolset for this new position is indeed social media, but don't neglect traditional forms of conversation as well. twitter, Facebook, blogging and RSS must supplement phone calls, lunch and handwritten notes to produce the ultimate, full-bodied, authentic, value-based conversation.

Perhaps you can't yet invest in a full-time employee to carry out this position, add it to the org chart and start developing the position, because it's no longer an optional function.

====

Again, from [Duct Tape Marketing](#)...this time a really good technique for churches and/or ministries...

### [Answer Questions Get Search Traffic](#)

Keyword research tool Wordtracker recently added a cool free tool called [Keyword Questions](#). I think this has some great SEO potential for [churches].



The screenshot shows the Keyword Questions tool interface. At the top, there is a search box with the text "Enter a single or short keyword:" and a "Search" button. Below the search box, the results for the keyword "blogging" are displayed. The results are organized into a table with two columns: "Question" and "Times asked".

Question	Times asked
1. what is blogging	212
2. what is the meaning of blogging	40
3. what the full is blogging	33
4. what is the meaning of the term blogging	29
5. how do i start blogging	23
7. how to make money blogging	18
7. need use provider for blogging where can i go	9
8. what different of blogging and podcasting	4
9. what is the best blogging software	3
11. blogging what is it	3
11. what type of website is best for blogging and social websites	3

Search engines have gotten really good at returning results for anything people want to know, so a growing number of people search by simply asking questions. [Who is Jesus? How to connect with a church? How to combine faith with community service?]

The idea Keyword Questions is that you can put any keyword or phrase in its search box and it will return a list of the actual questions people are asking about that topic and some measure of the volume. Using this tool for all of the various terms related to your [church] could spark some great and very specific ideas for creating blogs posts and pages that address and are optimized for these exact questions.

I am often asked why [church leaders] would want a blog and this is a great reason. People may not be looking for another blog to read, but they are searching for answers to questions and challenges and getting good at answering those exact questions is a fabulous way to use a blog to build [the kingdom].

What a joy it will be when the choir or a soloist sings the winning song or songs. At that worship service each congregation can truly "sing unto the Lord a new song."

===

and...from [Michael Smith's blog](#) comes this technique for planning worship...

It's Monday and today is the day I try to get a start on planning a future worship service. It all starts with a blank piece of paper (actually computer screen) and with a general thought about what the sermon topic will be for that Sunday.

[As I begin to try to fill up the page there are some questions that I ask myself:](#)

- **Is everything based on Scripture?**
- **Do the elements chosen communicate and reflect the characteristics of God and the full story of salvation through Christ?**
- **Do the elements of the service help people recognize God's presence and therefore connect people with God?**
- **Is there something familiar to a large group of the congregation in the worship plan?-- Familiarity would be different for different age groups and church backgrounds or absence of a church background.**
- **Does everything we do encourage people to participate?-- *Worship is a verb, something to participate in and not to watch.***
- **Do the elements of the service enhance or compromise the message?-- *If there is any indication that an element gets in the way of the content then it should not be used.***
- **Throughout the worship service, is time and opportunity given for people to...**

-- voice praise

-- voice thanksgiving

-- hear God's Word

-- respond to what they hear

-- pray to God in a personal and corporate way

The list of questions is not conclusive but it does give me a starting point. To go along with these questions I also try to vary the list of songs so that we don't always start with something up-tempo and end with something soft. But just recently I was on James McDonald's blog, pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, where he had posted a video of how they choose songs for worship. It is a different approach but one that deserves some serious consideration. Here is a [link to the blog post](#).

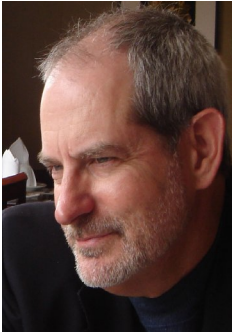
The bottom line is that I believe it is my responsibility and great privilege to encourage [this congregation](#) to meet God in the conversation of worship.

===

## Final Thoughts

By now you probably already know that I am on [facebook](#) and that there is a [Creator Leadership Network group](#) there too. I know that many people still look upon the internet as a "mixed blessing." There is good and bad, there, to be true, as with anything. But I've found the blogosphere to be a great tool for hearing other people's opinions, and an "iron sharpening iron" tool to test my own. While there is a lot of unsupervised junk out there, blogs also allow new and "not popular" yet prophetic voices a place to be heard without having to go through the book publishing maw. One of my current favorite blogs is the [Deep Church Blog](#). I encourage you to visit it, and others when you have the time. As with any frontier, however, caveat emptor.

Blessings.



### [Vern Sanders](#)

Vern has served in some form of church music and worship leadership for 40 years in a variety of denominations both in the US and in Canada. He is currently Director of Music at First Presbyterian Church, Templeton, California. He regularly consults with churches and church leaders. Look for his new book on the subject of the worship wars in 2009. Click on his name above to email him.

© 2009 Creator Magazine All Rights Reserved