

HOW TO NURTURE **GENEROSITY** IN THE NEW DIGITAL WORLD



Establishing Digital Connections in the New Normal

The once-implausible concept of the digital church became an overnight reality in 2020. The pandemic forced us to learn new ways to nurture human connections while maintaining a safe social distance.

Some churches white-knuckled through, posting sermon videos online and waiting out the end of isolation mandates.

But those churches that invested in ensuring their digital interactions (worship, social, teaching, and giving) were personal and engaging saw far more impact than they could have imagined before COVID, both by reaching a broader audience and by maintaining member engagement.

So, as churches reopened or planned for in-person gatherings, they weren't simply facilitating a return to "normal." They understood that the digital world was here to stay. They knew that going forward, digital connections would continue to play an essential role in connecting people to the next steps in their relationship with Jesus Christ and the church.

Now, they're leveraging the momentum and opportunities a year of fully digital church opened up in worship, engagement, outreach, discipleship, and growing generosity.

Save time and money, while accelerating giving growth."

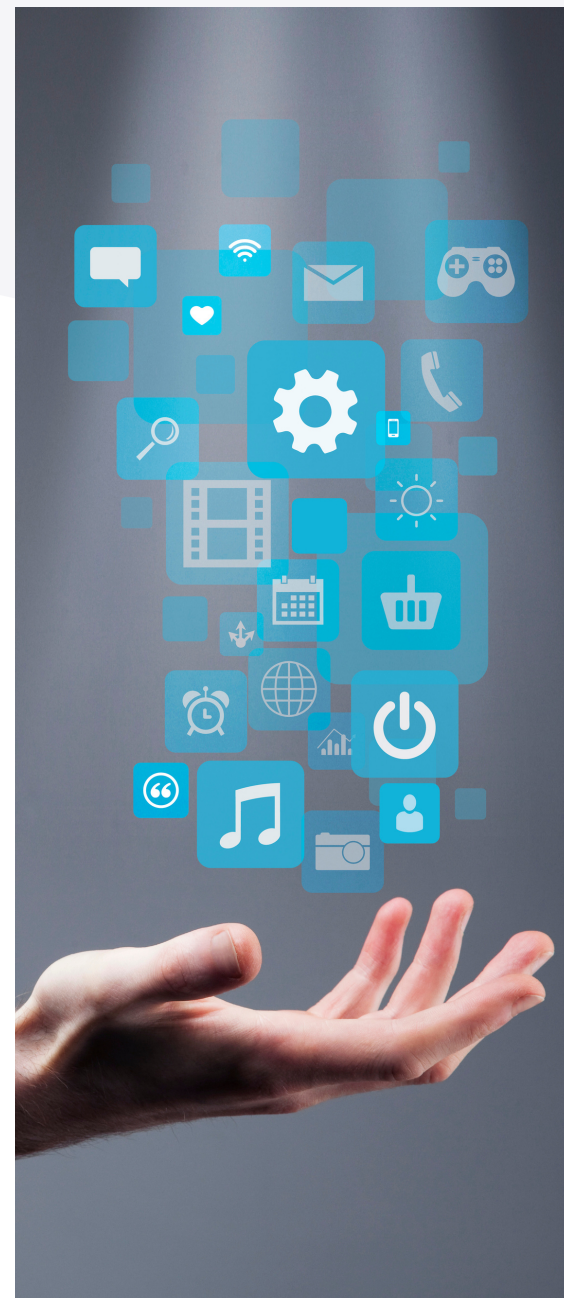
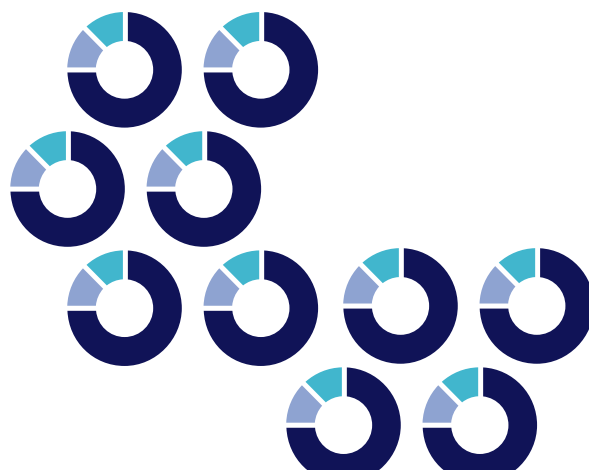




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Reimagining Digital Giving: How Do You “Grow” Generosity?



Relationships are the
foundation for any success
in church growth.
Technology can and does
play an important
supporting role.

“Growing” generosity is discipling givers to mature in their financial engagement with the church. Leaders know that generosity grows out of an abundance of love and trust in our heavenly Father.

That leads to the awareness that giving is an act of worship, a spiritual discipline God uses to bless those who trust him with their resources.

You don’t achieve this powerful result simply by offering online giving.

By themselves, digital tools don’t help givers experience the life-changing message that they’re sharing the blessings of the “abundant life” of Jesus, banding together with other believers to grow the kingdom of heaven. A give button doesn’t automatically convey the impact their giving has in their community or connect them to that community.

Instead, relationships are the foundation for any success in church growth strategy. But digital connections can and do play an important role in establishing and nurturing strong ties. Digital tools now enable leaders to understand where each giver is in this maturing process and communicate with them personally.

Can we use technology to facilitate giving? Yes. Can technology help convey God’s promise that it’s “more blessed to give than to receive”? We believe it can, when leaders use it to know their “audience” in order to spark interest and engagement.

The Power of Personalized Communications

Whether it was by Netflix, Amazon, Google or Facebook, we've all been moved to take action by brands that strategically put the specific products and services that interest us where we will see them.

Within this digital realm, it's clear that personalized communications and recommendations have been key to the unprecedented growth and success of the largest companies in the world.

And here's the truth: Your givers not only accept that their data will be used by brands they interact with to deliver personalized communications that enhance their experiences, they expect it — even from the church. They know it will deepen their engagement with the church they love.

First step? Know your givers.

When organizations refine their message to each person's interests and needs, growth occurs organically, sometimes exponentially. A one-size-fits-all weekly or monthly message can't be expected to grow areas like giving because givers are all different. But in some ways, they're alike in their differences, too. Each giver is in a different trackable phase of a journey we call the "Giver Lifecycle."

This is the path every believer follows as they learn the biblical principles of giving and are moved to invest in the church's mission.

Here are the four most common generalized giving profiles in the Giver Lifecycle:



When organizations refine their message to each individual person's specific interests and needs, growth occurs organically, sometimes exponentially.



New Givers

New givers are your greatest opportunity for long-term growth in every aspect of the church, not just giving. They need to be nurtured and matured; don't expect overnight impact from your efforts and don't count on them to shore up your church's finances in the short term.

They are still in a learning phase that must be taught, nurtured, and reinforced. Their giving may be the first sign of real engagement with the church. So they must be consistently affirmed with a sense of their gift's impact and the importance of taking on this spiritual discipline as one step in a greater journey of their spiritual development and relationship with God.

Without this engagement from the church, your long-term forecast for giving and all other types of engagement and growth with new givers will be impacted.

When first-time givers are trending in your data, it's important to explore who these individuals are. Detailed information on these givers allows staff to reach out to extend a hearty personal welcome (if they're new to your church).

Share information about your newcomers classes or a foundational Generosity Rockstar program that encourages a commitment to give as little as \$1 per week for the sake of growing the discipline of trusting God with their resources. If new givers are not new but are current members or guests who have suddenly started giving, you're doing something right. Keep it up

If first-time giving is down, it indicates either a lack of newcomers or a lack of engagement with your non-givers. Fortunately, your giving and attendance data should help you identify what is causing this, signaling where to focus your attention.

When you address this group separately, your primary message is Welcome! Often new givers will be newcomers, so it's a great opportunity to introduce them to the pastor with a video message in the email and include links to various ministries and opportunities to get involved in the church community.

If first-time giving is down, it indicates either a lack of newcomers or lack of engagement with your non-givers.

Infrequent Givers

Infrequent givers have given at least once but have yet to give consistently. Giving habits can reflect other issues, so identifying this group allows you to minister to folks who have yet to progress in their giving journey or other areas of spiritual growth and may need help.

A change in a household's formerly consistent giving may indicate a job loss, dissatisfaction with some aspect of the church, or even a family crisis.

If infrequent giving is trending across your whole membership, it signals a need to identify gaps in your messaging and investigate the overall health of your church. This is especially true if a sizeable swath of your previously consistent givers' habits have recently changed.

Manage risk by identifying specific households and reaching out directly to prevent further lapsing. This group might need further segmenting to understand trends and message to them appropriately.

For example:

Differentiate between those who have given in the past year and those who have not.

Or separate those infrequent givers you know who have recently become unemployed or have a family crisis. The types of encouragement they need will differ.



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Frequent Givers

Frequent givers set a solid, reliable baseline of revenue that fuels your ministries, so it's essential to convey how much you value them.

Newly consistent giving signals that something good is happening, perhaps a renewed dedication to the church, a new job, or some other positive life event. Understanding the reasons for the new giving will help you to serve them better.



This group is invested in your church, usually beyond just their giving. If you have a good relationship with them, top givers can be approached about inheritance or legacy giving (putting the church in their will).

This is the phase where your next top givers will come from, so be generous with your gratitude and include them in initiatives where their passion lies. They're more likely to give beyond their tithe or current giving and become financial leaders when they feel pivotal and invested in the life of the church.

Your data can identify those frequent givers with similar capacity and propensity to your top givers but haven't yet reached that level. With proper nurturing, they could become top givers themselves one day.

Top Givers

Top givers are your best opportunity to develop the programs the church needs now. They require a strong sense of relationship and are moved to give by their interests and passion. If they are not involved, heard, and allowed to make an impact in the areas of their interest, their desire to invest heavily in the church may wane. As your budget's primary "bread-and-butter," so to speak, it's essential to know them well and include them early in initiatives that speak to their heart.

Your top givers are amazing stewardship leaders, so following their giving trends is crucial for encouraging their long-term faithfulness and the church's short-term financial strength. You will want to reach out directly to your top givers regarding giving campaigns and special events or to acknowledge their enormous generosity personally. Asking for their advice on matters related to the church is an excellent way to engage them.

Manage risk by tracking how much you rely on your most generous members for revenue. If the percentage is too high, you're blessed. However, a sudden loss of one or more of these donors could negatively impact your church. That's why you must focus on your non-givers and those in other giving stages and continually seek to move them along the Giver Lifecycle.

How Technology Enables Personalized Messaging



Until recently, the required tools and technology for mass personalization weren't readily available to churches. Customizing communications to hundreds or thousands of individuals was far too laborious, time-consuming and costly.

But now, the same enterprise-level reporting and marketing tools that major companies use are available to churches of any size for little to no cost.

For example, Vision2 includes robust reporting and data for analytics, which your church can use to classify individuals at every stage of the giving journey, from new givers to mature, engaged givers.

Classifying or segmenting your membership list by giver stages is just like organizing your Sunday School classes into grade levels or offering a newcomers class and an apologetics study and presenting unique curriculums to each group.

This technology allows you to customize targeted communications to each "segment"

or group so you can effectively minister to each person as you disciple them.

If that sounds like a lot of work, there's good news. You can use the tools built right into Vision2 to automate this process in a way that supports the relational aspect you're also nurturing. You can support your donor development and discipleship with personalized communications at scale.

Done correctly, automating your messaging contains three components that serve as a powerful supplemental relationship-building tool:

- Classifying your givers
- Planning your communications sequence
- Crafting your messages



1. Classify Your Givers

Start by gathering historical data about your givers from your church management system and/or church-giving platform. This data will allow you to identify groups based on giving patterns, and then you can tailor your communications to the needs of these various groups.

Begin with a simple list containing the name and contact information of those who donated to your church over the past 12-18 months, how often they donated, what method they used to donate, and if they donated to any special causes.

Next, you'll set up the categories your givers fall into. You can use the previously described ones (new, infrequent, frequent, and top givers) and label these giver types whatever you want.

Feel free to define additional segments (such as 'holiday givers' or 'ministry supporters' - those who support only one ministry) or create subsets that denote offline and online giving for each giving stage.

For each giving frequency, define each category as you see fit. For example:

- A new giver could be someone who gave their first gift in the last 3-6 months.
- An infrequent giver might be someone who gave 4-12 times in the last year.
- Frequent givers could be those who gave consistently for the past 12 months.
- Top givers are long-time or major donors.

Make sure you have the following information for each giver:

- *First and last name*
- *Primary and secondary email address*
- *Home address*
- *Phone number*

2. Plan Your Communication Sequence

The following information applies to any kind of messaging campaign you want to conduct, but let's say you want to run a campaign to transition more of your cash and check givers to online giving.

By targeting only cash and check givers, you don't risk bombarding existing online givers with an irrelevant message.

First, consider all the messaging channels you want to include. Email is often the most effective messaging tool, but some givers will respond better to direct mail, phone calls, special attention (i.e. major donors) or social media. For best results, you can use more than one at the same time.

Second, for your email campaign, create a response sequence. Messages for different giver segments in any campaign may be very similar, with minor tweaks for each group that can have a major impact.

The typical triggered email sequence in each segment could follow this pattern:

Email 1: Thank you for supporting our ministry. Introduction to online giving with simple instructions.

Email 2: Automated to send one week after Email 1: Same email (with a new subject line) but resend only to those who didn't open Email 1. Your marketing automation tool can do this automatically.

Email 3, automated send one week after Email 1: Send to those who opened but didn't take action on Email 1 (e.g. setting up an online giving profile), asking how you can help.

Save significant time and money by enabling access to Vision2's self-service portal and eliminating costly statement printing and mail-outs.

All in a giving system with NO monthly fees, giving limits or velocity limits.



3. Craft Your Message

Finally, it's time to write your messages. Building a library of short, prewritten emails for each giving type and each response in the sequence makes it easy to quickly ensure each recipient feels the message is personal to them.

In your messaging automation tool, simply select the giver segment, then select the prewritten email you want to send to start the sequence for everyone in that segment.

Vision2 and our network of partners can help users with any aspect of classifying, email sequencing and automating, or messaging.

A Few Tips for Success

- Make sure your online giving tool features [automated and tailored messaging for acknowledgments](#), as well as data for analytics to inform further messaging strategies.
- Review and update your [online giving page to make sure everything's in order](#).
- Keep your messages short - just a few sentences. Or better yet, if your giving tool's messaging system enables it, [embed imagery, a video, and links to available resources into your email](#).
- Remember the Rule of 7, that [people sometimes have to see a message multiple times before it registers](#). Try again in different ways.
- [Learn from your campaign](#): What subject lines worked best? What day of the week or time of day got more responses? Did videos produce more engagement?
- Remember, [you cannot say thank you too often!](#)



Treat acknowledgments as more than an afterthought. A customized, meaningful thank you is just as important as the giving experience.

Ready to learn more?

Vision2 is more than giving software.
A true solution like Vision2 solves
your church's giving challenges.

Do Good. Better.™

Contact Us:

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Our Promise:

As your partner, we'll support you every step of the way.

