

Social Media Case Study: Bayside Church, Granite Bay,
California

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ADPR 466

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8 July 2016

Over the course of seven days, from June 28 through July 4, 2016 I observed Bayside, a large church located in Granite Bay, California, on three social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Facebook Content Analysis

Bayside has a considerable amount of followers on Facebook; as of July 6, Bayside has 27,605 page likes. Facebook was Bayside's only consistently active social media account of the three and had evidence of a strategic plan. There were 10 Facebook posts over the course of the week, and every post used a photo and links, both of which are proven to be more effective ways to draw interest to Facebook posts. The posts were lighthearted and inviting in tone.

Every weekday morning, Bayside would post a link to a video devotional hosted by one of its pastors or guest pastors. The morning post would occur between 5:45 a.m. to around 7:30 a.m. The daily devotionals were short in length and reinforced the themes of the message taught over the weekend. This was a great way to extend Bayside's involvement with its parishioner's lives throughout the week rather than just on connecting on the weekend. For the followers on Facebook, it was a great daily reminder of the church's contribution and improved the image of the church as being one focused on the lives of the attendees are their relationship with God. The fact that the church used the pastors to speak to the audience was an excellent way of building trust.

For three of the five weekdays Bayside posted a second time, excepting June 29 in which there were three posts. The second post occurred sometime in the afternoon, and the subject material varied. On June 29, this second post recognized the volunteers of the children's summer camps and asked the Facebook followers to pray for them and the children. The third post on June 29 reminded followers of an upcoming celebration for the volunteers. The next day there were two posts as well; the second post on the June 30 was a reminder to parents to sign their teenagers up for a summer camp. July 1 was the other only day with a second post, and it was a reminder that after the evening weekend services were "Summer Nights," or an event where there were fun activities and food available for the churchgoers.

Posting multiple times throughout the day was an excellent way for Bayside to inform its audience of important events happening in the church community. The second post on July 1 was strategic because it was a Friday, which gave the audience time to plan on attending one of the

evening services if they were interested in attending “Summer Nights.” Posting multiple times on June 29 proved effective as well. Both of the posts were relevant to the theme of acknowledging the volunteers of the children’s camps. Because these posts generally occurred much later in the day (the earliest was at 11:44 a.m. and the latest was 3 p.m.), it gave the impression that these posts were of less importance than the daily devotional. This helped reinforce the fact that Bayside’s primary focus is on helping members strengthen their relationship with God rather than the events that the church was putting on.

Bayside’s Facebook strategy changed over the weekend. Because sermons were occurring on both Saturday and Sunday there were no morning devotional posts. The post on Saturday occurred at 6 p.m. and was a video of a staff member explaining “Summer Nights.” The post on Sunday occurred at 2:45 p.m. and informed people of what message was about and who was preaching that night. These posts were great to remind people of what was happening and provide insight into what was being taught so people had enough time to visit if they wanted to.

Bayside mostly posted at key times throughout the day; the secondary posts occurred between 1 and 3 p.m., which is within the time range where it is best to post on Facebook (“What 16 Studies Say”).

The most effective post Bayside had over the course of the week was the post asking the audience to pray for the children and the leaders of the children’s camps. It had over 300 likes within 24 hours. Not only did the post include a call of action, but it featured a photograph of a lot of volunteers and provided these volunteers with recognition. Because of this post, Bayside appeared appreciative and caring of the people who attend the church and volunteer.

Twitter Content Analysis

Bayside’s Twitter account only has 6,703 followers, which is the least followers of any of the three social media I observed. Bayside only posted from its Twitter account once, and the post occurred on Sunday, July 3, at 3:06 p.m. The post was a condensed version of the post occurred on the church’s Facebook page 21 minutes earlier and talked about the sermon occurring that evening. This was the only instance where cross-posting occurred.

Instagram Content Analysis

Bayside's second-most popular account is Instagram, which had 7,100 followers as of July 6. Although Bayside posts photos roughly every week, they did not utilize Instagram on any of the seven days that I observed it.

Overall Analysis

Before starting my observation, I believed that Bayside would fully utilize its multiple social media channels to deliver the same message or expand upon content found on its other sites. However, Bayside only had a consistent strategy for its Facebook page. This is evident because there was only one instance in which its Twitter account was used and Instagram was never used in the seven day period.

Recommendations

Because of the diversity of the audience at church and the variety of ages and life experiences of the audience that attends the church, Bayside has both challenges and opportunities when it comes to improving its social media. In addition, Bayside receives criticism for being too big of a church to care about the individual attendee and build a tight-knit community, and one way to change this perception would be to provide individualized attention on social media. I believe Bayside can make a few changes that would greatly improve its social media strategy and following and in turn, strengthen its relationship with the people that attend the church.

Facebook Recommendation

Facebook is Bayside's strongest social media site, but there are a few slight improvements that can be made to make it more effective. One recommendation is to schedule the devotional for the same time every day. It is to my understanding that Bayside also has a SMS service available for the video devotionals, but for people who do not have SMS or a smartphone, it could benefit them to have the devotional be posted at the same time every day. I recommend Bayside to post the devotional at 5:30 a.m.; although this is not considered a time where most people are online, it gives people time to watch the devotional in the morning before leaving for school or work. If they check Facebook before getting up in the morning, the devotional would be one of the first things they would see. This would make Bayside seem more dependable and their devotionals more reliable and ensure more views.

As I mentioned before, Bayside did a phenomenal job of scheduling the secondary posts for a time of day when most people were online. However, Bayside could further increase the

effectiveness of its posts by scheduling them for exactly 1 p.m. to increase the share rate or 3 p.m. to increase click rate (“What 16 Studies Say”). In addition, Bayside could benefit more from posting more on the weekend; there is a 32 percent higher engagement with Facebook posts on Saturday and Sunday (“What 16 Studies Say”).

Bayside’s only sermon-related post occurred on Sunday afternoon at 2:46 p.m. Although this is proven to be a time where most people see and engage with posts, it failed to inform the audience about the sermon at a convenient time. At the time of the post, five of the six sermons had already occurred. This may seem like a good time to post sermon information because it is the last chance the audience has to see the sermon on the weekend, but it would be more beneficial if Bayside began to establish more interest in the weekend service earlier in the week. The best time to post this information would be Saturday in the early afternoon at 1 p.m., three and a half hours before the first sermon of the weekend. This gives the audience plenty of time which sermon times works best for them.

Another instance where post times could be adjusted is with the “Summer Nights” posts. The post on Friday occurred at a reasonable time, but the post on Saturday where “Summer Nights” were explained should have happened earlier in the day. The video was posted at 6:11 p.m.; at that point, it was too late to attend the event that evening and the viewer would have to wait for Sunday night if they wanted to go.

A minor change that has to be made is greater discipline in the grammar and wording of the posts. In particular, the post on Sunday July 3 was awkward and one of the words was misspelled.

The last recommendation I have for Bayside’s Facebook page is to increase engagement with the audience. Although comments did not occur on every post, Bayside should monitor the page and respond, even if it is just a like. By doing so, Bayside will seem more friendly and open to its audience and willing to communicate.

Twitter Recommendation

Bayside needs to start using Twitter more often and needs to post content that is not already available on Bayside’s other social media sites. With Twitter, Bayside has an opportunity to increase its engagement with an audience and start conversations. In addition, Adweek reported that “the largest number of U.S. users is within the low end of the millennial demo”

(“Infographic”). This provides Bayside with a way to specifically target and appeal to the younger churchgoing crowd.

One way in which Bayside could drive traffic to Twitter and create content for its Twitter page is to advertise hashtags during the sermons. Bayside maintains a brand image of being a casual church that is up-to-date with cultural events, so it would be effective if Bayside encouraged people to tweet questions or use Twitter hashtags as a way to engage with them. Bayside can start the conversation and then curate the comments and discussion through retweets and replies.

Bayside’s pastors maintain Twitter accounts and actively post information pertaining to Christianity and other content related to Bayside, so Bayside’s Twitter account could retweet some of the content that the pastors post on their personal accounts. This would improve its followers’ relationship with the pastors and increase overall trust in the church.

Bayside could also use Twitter to reinforce the messages occurring in the sermons and in the daily devotionals. This could be as simple as tweeting a quote or the Bible verse associated with the devotional/sermon. Twitter also serves as an excellent way to remind about the upcoming events. I thought Bayside did a great job with reinforcing the message about the weekend sermon, but it could benefit further by also tweeting about the volunteer event, “Summer Nights,” and deadline for the teenager summer camp.

As with Facebook, Bayside needs to increase its engagement on Twitter. Due to the nature of Twitter as being more conversational, it is necessary for Bayside to start becoming more active in monitoring its mentions. For example, on July 3, a Twitter user tweeted at Bayside a very positive message concerning the weekend sermon (see Appendix B). Bayside did not like, retweet, or reply to this tweet. This poses a threat to Bayside because by seeming distant and not monitoring the conversation about the brand, they appear to be clueless to what people think of them and not grateful of the earned media from people who are supportive of the church. A similar instance occurred on June 28 when someone posted about the children’s camp (see Appendix B). There is already a conversation happening about the church, and Bayside needs to start participating in it and rewarding those who make the talk positively about the church.

Instagram Recommendation

Bayside does not have a problem with the content of its posts on Instagram; looking at previous posts, I believe that the photos of the camps, short videos of the worship during service,

and of pastors and other community events is very effective. However, Bayside could add more diverse content on Instagram. Most of the recent photos on Instagram are of things everyone has the opportunity to see. They could use Instagram to build a relationship by providing behind-the-scenes looks into different aspects of the church that often go ignored. They could also profile workers or volunteers that do not have profiles on the church's website, share photos from youth and high school activities, and provide exclusive looks at the developing of the content of the sermons, worship, and events. This would further reinforce Bayside's image of being a church that is open and honest, and Bayside would be seen as more appreciative of volunteers and staff by sharing information about them to a large audience.

Bayside should also consider cross-posting the content on Instagram on Facebook. Since most Instagram users are ages 34 and under, members of the older demographic that are more likely to be active on Facebook do not get to see the photos ("Infographic"). Cross-posting would allow the photos to reach a larger audience and would also drive more traffic to the Instagram page.

Other Recommendations: YouTube

One place where Bayside could improve its social media is to be active on YouTube publically. Bayside's public post occurred about 10 months ago. However, Bayside continues to use YouTube as the platform to publish its video devotionals and weekend sermons. These videos have disabled comments and can only be reached either through the Facebook page, the Bayside website, or through the SMS text sent to subscribers.

Bayside should stop disabling comments and start sharing information on YouTube to the public. Although it is understandable that many organizations, especially those that are focused on religion, would feel it best to disable comments to prevent inappropriate or hateful words on the video, I believe that it could do more harm than good. Disabling comments "makes it seem like you have something to hide" and "can frustrate and alienate viewers who have something positive to say" (Marshall). The feeling that the church has something to hide or is not open to improvement is only reinforced through its videos' inability to be accessed on the YouTube account. If Bayside makes commenting available and starts publishing videos publically, the church would appear to be more transparent and therefore increase its relationship with the audience. In addition, valuable discussions could start on the videos and members of the church could feel as if their voice and opinions are being heard and valued by the church.

Other Recommendations: Periscope/Livestreaming

Bayside records every single one of its services and offers livestreaming on occasion, but the livestreaming is not consistent and does not occur every weekend. Bayside could start utilizing livestreaming as a way to reach audience members who are either unable to attend. On Saturdays and on Sundays, Bayside does not post the weekend service and instead waits until Monday morning to post the video of the service on YouTube. Also, Bayside already has an online donation link, which could help remove any concern that people will not give money if they are not physically attending church. Using livestreaming as an option gives the impression that Bayside is a church dedicated to spreading the message of what it believes in rather than trying to focus on getting people through the door.

Conclusion

Bayside is excellent at being active in posting on Facebook and providing users with quality content on Facebook and Instagram, but the church has a lot of potential to grow in different areas of social media in order to reach its diverse audience members. Overall, Bayside needs to increase engagement on its social media sites and become more transparent in order to reinforce the image of being an honest, open, and caring church.

Works Cited

"Infographic: Who's Really Using Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr and Instagram in 2015." *AdWeek*. AdWeek, 12 Jan. 2015. Web. 08 July 2016.

Marshall, Carla. "Why You Should Not Disable YouTube Comments." *Tubular Insights*. Tubular Insights, 13 Mar. 2014. Web. 08 July 2016.

"What 16 Studies Say About The Best Times To Post On Social Media." *CoSchedule Blog*. CoSchedule, 13 Apr. 2016. Web. 03 July 2016.

Appendix A: Daily Observations

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/baysidechurch/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BaysideChurch>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/baysidechurch/>

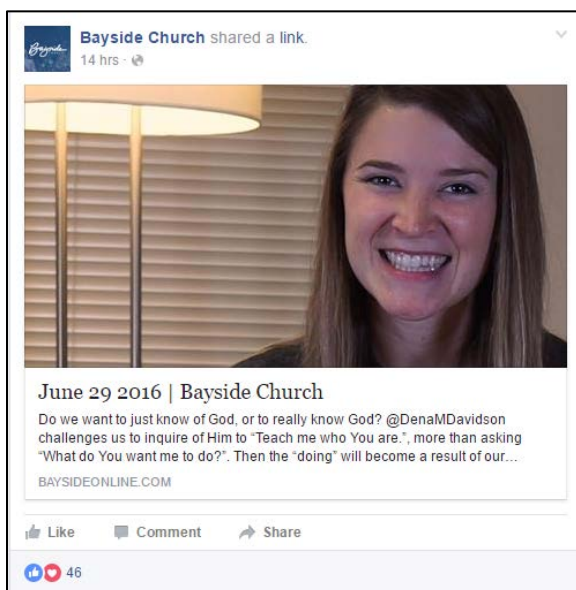
June 28, 2016

Facebook: Post at 6:40 a.m. local time. A link to a YouTube video devotional. Gathered 16 likes and 15 shares by the next day.



June 29, 2016

Facebook: First post occurred at 7:22 a.m.



Second post occurred at 11:44 a.m. and had amassed over 300 likes in 24 hours.

Bayside Church at [Bayside Church](#).
10 hrs · 🌐

Here's some of the incredible volunteers serving all week at Bayside's Breakaway Kids Camp. Pray for them and the children that they may all grow in their relationship with God.




👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share


👍❤️ 241 Top Comments ▾

Third post occurred at 2:30

Bayside Church
7 hrs · 🌐

Breakaway Volunteers at all campuses: Volapalooza is tomorrow night! Don't miss out on this volunteer comeback night full of stories, food trucks, zip lines, go karts, bungees, arts and crafts, rally and more! Bring your family and experience breakaway!




Granite Bay Campus | 8191 Sierra College Blvd. Roseville, CA 

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍❤️ 21

4 shares

 Write a comment... 📷 😊

June 30, 2016

Facebook: First post occurred at 6:30 a.m.

Bayside Church shared a link. 16 hrs · 🌐



June 30 2016 | Bayside Church

We get to know our new Folsom campus Pastor @BrianHopkinsMT a little this morning, as he shares a couple questions we can ask ourselves at the start of each day, as a safeguard from any lag in our relationship with God. Follow...
BAYSIDEONLINE.COM

Like Comment Share

39 Top Comments ▾

Second post occurred at 3 p.m.

Bayside Church 8 hrs · 🌐

Have you signed your student up for Summer Camp? It's not too late! Join us this year at Hume San Diego for an incredible week of absolute fun and unforgettable memories - July 24-29! Register online at http://granitebay.baysideonline.com/.../unleashed-high-schoo... and email highschool@baysideonline.com with any questions, as well as to hear about the latest scholarship opportunities.



Like Comment Share


3

1 share

July 1, 2016

Facebook: First post at 5:46 a.m.

Bayside Church shared a link.
Yesterday at 5:46am · 🌐



July 01 2016 | Bayside Church
What an amazing summer series we're enjoying each weekend in all 19 services at all 5 Bayside locations. This morning, @CurtHarlow not only pronounces the guy's name perfectly, but he shows us how we can apply what our #HiddenHero...
BAYSIDEOONLINE.COM

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍❤️ 38 Top Comments ▾

15 shares

Second post at 2:05 p.m.

Bayside Church
23 hrs · 🌐

Its Red, White & Summer Nights!
This weekend during all of our evening services join us for Costa Vida, Kona Ice, lawn games and a whole lot of dancing! Come dance your way into this 4th of July weekend with our breakaway dancers, or beat the heat with some shaved ice!
It's Summer Nights at Bayside, all we're missing is you!



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

July 2, 2016

Facebook: Post at 6:11 p.m.

Bayside Church
6 hrs · 🌐

Summer Nights are here! Before and after Saturday and Sunday services at the Granite Bay campus, enjoy food, fun, and games with your family and friends! Erica explains.



357 Views

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 26

1 share

July 3, 2016

Facebook: Post at 2:46 p.m.

Bayside Church
8 hrs · 🌐

TONIGHT at Bayside Granite Bay, Karl Romeus explains another great story of one of God's Hidden Heroes, Mephibosheth. Now, his name is hard to pronounce but his story is amazing and answers the question, can I make a comeback? 7:00pm tonight at Bayside Granite Bay.



👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

👍 8 Top Comments ▾

Twitter: Post at 3:06 p.m.



A screenshot of a Twitter post from Bayside Church (@BaysideChurch) posted at 3:06 PM on July 3, 2016. The post text reads: "Tonight at 7pm Karl Romeus explores another of God's Hidden Heroes. His name is hard to pronounce, his story amazing". Below the text is a purple graphic with a white circular arrow icon pointing left. The text on the graphic says "Can I make a comeback?" and "The story of Mephibosheth". The post shows 2 likes and a "Follow" button.

July 4, 2016

Facebook: Only one at 6 a.m.



A screenshot of a Facebook post from Bayside Church, shared a link 15 hours ago. The link preview features a photo of a man with a beard and a light blue shirt. The text of the link preview reads: "July 04 2016 | Bayside Church. Happy 4th of July! As our minds and hearts are turned toward our country on its 240th birthday, Senior Pastor @CurtHarlow shares the Bible's 'political' go-to-verse and then a to-do action for us to take today. BAYSIDEONLINE.COM". Below the link preview are interaction buttons for "Like", "Comment", and "Share". The post shows 84 likes and 25 shares, with a "Top Comments" dropdown menu.

Appendix B: Missed Opportunities

Tweet on June 28:



Tweet on July 3:

