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TECHNOLOGY
CAN **ENHANCE**
DISCIPLESHIP IN
THE DIGITAL AGE

by **DEREK HAZELET**



TouchPoint

People Focused. Ministry Maximized.

Introduction

There's no denying that technology has introduced many cultural implications for the people who walk through our church doors every Sunday. On one hand, we are more networked than ever before. We go to work, interact with people we see at the gym, talk with other parents at our kids' soccer practices, and probably even attend church most Sundays. Yet, many people spend their days feeling as isolated as ever, wondering if we're really connecting. Our society is more "connected" than at any other time in history, yet people are still longing for community.

In some ways, technology hasn't helped. While it has created ways for people to seem more connected, it still leaves a void. Social media allows us to keep up with people and interact in new ways. Podcasts and YouTube let us catch up on the sermon we missed last Sunday. Email and apps keep us updated on what's going on. Technology ensures that we don't miss anything; yet, the truth is that most people live most days feeling stressed, like something is still missing.

While technology has created a larger void in some ways, it does give church leaders access to information and tools they can use to actually help people overcome these challenges. Today's Church Management Systems have created new opportunities to enhance their discipleship efforts despite the fact that we live in an increasingly busy and noisy world.

4 WAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN ENHANCE DISCIPLESHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE

How do you create an environment where people learn what it means to be a disciple who makes disciples in a decentralized world? The following pages provide four ways your Church Management software can help.



1 Be more effective about helping people connect and assimilate through automation.

As church leaders, it's easy to think our assimilation process is intuitive and easy. But for many of your guests and new members, it's not. People need to be guided to the next step they can or should take.

Many church leaders rely on manual processes and systems to move people toward deeper levels of engagement. You might be using your Church Management System to identify new members, but it still requires you to reach out to them manually (personally or through a volunteer). As a result, moving people from first-time guests to fully-engaged members requires a lot of work, and there's always a risk that people will slip through the cracks.

The good news is that new technology makes it easier to automate and augment the assimilation process by setting up communication series that help people identify with your church and find their places in it.

Are you using your Church Management System to guide people through the assimilation process in a relevant and personal way (based on their life stage and interests), then automating the hand-off to the area of ministry they're interested in? If not, this is an invaluable tool to accelerate assimilation and enhance your discipleship efforts.



Be more intentional about ensuring people don't slip through the cracks.

What if you could be notified that a church member or family was thinking about unplugging well before they left your church? This is entirely possible because of the information that likely exists in your systems.

A lot of times, we don't recognize people are disengaging until they're completely unplugged... which can be too late. It's rare that a church member or family withdraws suddenly. Most of the time, it starts with the thing that will be noticed least. They stop giving. Then they might stop going to worship every Sunday. Then they stop volunteering or going to small group, which is most often when someone finally notices. At that point, they've probably already checked out.

This is where your Church Management System can help. Setting up engagement rules around some of those leading indicators allows you to get ahead of a person or family that is starting to disconnect. This is a real opportunity for ministry. Using the same criteria that monitors people's increasing involvement, we can set up checkpoints to ensure people aren't starting to slip away. You begin to catch these members by setting up business rules that notify you when someone begins to disengage and can automatically reach out to them in a personal and relevant way. Which leads us to our next point...



3 Be more efficient at engaging people in personal, relevant, and timely ways.

Earning the attention of church members has become much more difficult in our increasingly noisy world. We can't expect people to remember or be motivated to act on an idea they hear during one hour on a Sunday morning. Fortunately, technology can help you bridge that gap between Sundays and engage every person more effectively.

This is where your Church Management System becomes an invaluable tool. It combines the data you collect with a communication tool that applies that information. You have access to information that can be leveraged to help people grow spiritually. You know their life stage, their interests and, in some ways, where they are in their discipleship journey. Segmentation allows you to strategically communicate with church members based on their specific interests and involvement levels in your ministry. Personalization allows you engage each church member with contextualized next steps to help them grow individually.

An effective Church Management System allows you to monitor and measure your communication efforts to increase ministry effectiveness. Understanding how people are interacting with your church not only helps you understand what's working, it helps you engage each church member effectively and uncover what's most pressing in their lives.



4 Be more deliberate about defining and monitoring your discipleship pathway.

Creating an environment where people are becoming disciples who makes disciples requires equipping people to do ministry. Few church leaders are satisfied with a church that simply collects people and reports their attendance, but that's how many use their Church Management System.

Advances in technology allow you to equip lay leaders and volunteers in your church with tools they can use to manage ministry through mobile applications. Whether it's a small-group leader keeping track of attendance or a volunteer recording notes from a visitation, leveraging mobile technology to equip lay leaders to be more effective is an increasingly important trend church leaders should know.

Technology Doesn't Have To Dehumanize Discipleship – It Should Enhance It

It's tempting to think that technology removes the relational aspect of ministry or makes discipleship seem cold; however, nothing can be further from the truth.

Rather than relying on one-on-one interactions or manual processes dependent exclusively on someone making a contact, technology gives you the ability to move people toward deeper levels of engagement in a way that's automatic, personal, and scalable. Setting up notifications around engagement allows you to identify when a church member is starting to slip through the cracks, well before they're gone. Using a Church Management System with mobile app technology lets you equip the saints for ministry in a new way. If anything, technology doesn't dehumanize the discipleship process, it enhances the relational aspect of it, allowing you to maximize ministry impact.

As church leaders, it's important to remember that Jesus used the things that were around him to communicate and teach. We have to do the same thing.

If we're going to reach people and accelerate Kingdom impact, we have to be confident the tools we're using are actually working. Applying these four ideas and finding ways to leverage them through your Church Management software is essential for engaging people and making disciples in today's digital world.

Get started with your **FREE TouchPoint Trial**

<http://try.TouchPointsoftware.com/TouchPoint-church-management-software/>

Connect with our team to learn more at info@TouchPointsoftware.com

About TouchPoint

TouchPoint provides a robust yet affordable church management software system for mobile devices and computers that enables and equips church leaders to manage their church, engage their people, and fund their vision. The software solution was developed by founder and lead developer, David Carroll, as a way to help his home congregation, Bellevue Baptist Church, manage their members more effectively and efficiently. Today, 285 churches use TouchPoint as their go-to church management system.

About Derek Hazelet



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Derek Hazelet has nearly 25 years of experience leading in for-profit and nonprofit environments. His unique combination of business and local church experience fuels his passion to see churches and organizations realize their full potential through the ministry of stewardship. Derek serves as Senior Vice

President for RSI, with a primary focus on the development and delivery of stewardship ministries, processes, and resources for small and medium sized churches. He received his MA from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. He has also traveled extensively around the world in partnership with his home church and the Global Orphan Project as a hands-on advocate for orphaned and abandoned children. Derek is also actively involved in his local church.



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