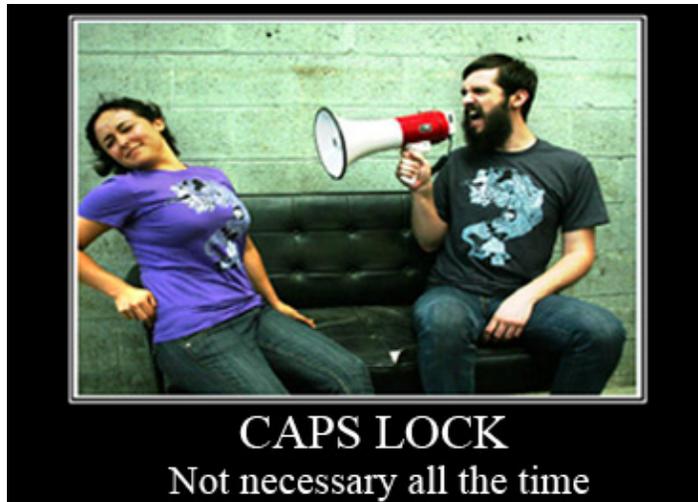


## Eight Church Communication Faux Pas

By Darby Jones



**SUMMARY:** Effective church communication is more than preaching a sermon that inspires. It requires careful planning and consideration of your audience.

Here are eight common church-communications blunders to avoid.

### 1. "I don't need a marketing plan."

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there." --The Cheshire Cat, *Alice in Wonderland*. Try the United Methodist Communications website at [www.umcom.org](http://www.umcom.org) for marketing plan ideas. Click on Tools & Tips, then Church Marketing Plan.

### 2. "Ready. Fire! Aim."

Getting your marketing steps out of order can be extremely costly. Just remember the three "M's:" Message, Movement and Method. More importantly, remember the order to execute them.

Step 1: Message – What is the purpose and point of each of your communication efforts? Create a strong and compelling call to action in each.

Step 2: Movement – What do you want to happen because of your message? Be specific in terms of attendance, actions and feelings.

Step 3: Method – How will you connect the message with the movement?

If method comes first, you may wind up with something that looks amazing but does nothing for the cause. If the movement comes first, you get a bunch of people milling around with no sense of purpose or direction.

**3. “The church down the road is doing it and it’s working great.”**

However, every congregation is unique, so a “one-size-fits-all” approach is not the best. Many people go to other churches because they are looking for something different. So don’t copy other communications and ministries outright. Customize. It’s ok to repurpose another church’s ideas or ministries, but add an original component that makes you stand out. Start by finding out the differing interests of your congregation and the other people you are trying to reach. Based on your findings, figure out the best communication methods to use.

**4. “Everyone gets my message.”**

Often the message gets lost because it’s either unclear or buried. Think of your call to action like the title to a classic song. Many times the title is conversational, prominently placed and repeated. Some people get away with breaking these rules. For instance, Bob Dylan can write a song nobody understands, yet people still think it is cool. Why? Because “cool” overshadows esoteric or “artsy” writing. It’s hard to pull off though, so as a rule, assume nobody “gets” your message. Next, rethink your content and test it on people who aren’t familiar with it.

**5. “I went to seminary and want everyone to know it.”**

People shouldn’t need a seminary degree to understand you – whether you are preaching, teaching or writing an article for the website. Unless your content comes with a translator, do not speak “churchy” language.

**6. “People are dying to hear my opinion.”**

Communication is a privilege, not a right. Many pastors get so used to their congregation listening to them every Sunday that they forget that the “unchurched” aren’t so eager to listen. People care about their own interests. Don’t assume people know, like or care about your message. Think about who is listening, and tailor your message accordingly. Make the message as clear and compelling as possible.

**7. “My message is always interesting.”**

I see a lot of church communication that is both good and original. However, the good parts aren’t original, and the original parts aren’t good. Content that isn’t compelling or interesting isn’t likely to be read or heard.

**8. “It’s too expensive to do it right.”**

If your marketing material looks cheap, it will most likely repel people and do the opposite of what you intended. As much as we like to provide inexpensive marketing methods, we also like to promote wise decisions. Know when you can skimp and when you need to make the investment in especially important communications efforts.

-- Darby Jones, eMarketing Coordinator at United Methodist Communications.