

A Field Guide for Asking the Right Questions of Your Church's Data



Numbers Don't Matter

Imagine you'd somehow never heard of bowling. Then you walked into an alley on a bustling Friday night and tried to decipher the players' scores. You'd probably correctly deduce that a higher score is better, but what's the meaning of all those slashes and Xs on the screen? Why don't the scores from the individual frames seem to add up in a straightforward manner? Why do some players get extra turns at the end of the game?

(And, not for nothing, what madman designed the crazy animations on the scoreboard?)

This is why we say that numbers don't matter. Without context, knowledge, and analysis, all the raw data in the world won't do you any good, whether you're looking at bowling scores or your online church metrics.

Given the popularity of [ChMS](#), [giving](#), [mobile apps](#), [livestreaming](#), and other digital solutions designed to support ministry, virtually every church is swimming in an ocean of data that can provide invaluable insights—but only if you know how to read into the numbers, identify the meaning and trends behind them, and translate those figures into actionable strategies moving forward.

If that sounds a bit overwhelming, don't worry. That kind of analysis is a challenge for even the most tech-minded ministries. But knowing where to start is half the battle, and you're already reading this field guide, so you're well on your way!

In the coming pages, we'll talk through five metrics you should consider emphasizing as a measure of progress and success for your church. As you read, keep the unique

goals, mission, and vision for your ministry front of mind. Everyone wants their bowling score church's engagement metrics to soar overnight; instead, search for ways to make small improvements to your data analysis and online strategy, and trust that intentional strategy and steady progress will take your church where it was always destined to go.

New Active Members

Once upon a time, church attendance was the be-all and end-all of church metrics. But let's face it. Anyone can gather a crowd.

In today's fast-paced, everything-at-our-fingertips, easily-distracted-by-cute-cat-videos digital age, what matters is not getting but keeping and actively engaging your audience's attention. So, if you're still counting heads during services, it's time to switch gears.

Attendance can vary due to numerous factors, so engagement serves as a more reliable indicator of the investment your new members place in your ministry. Are people continuing to attend services or bible studies after their initial visit? Will people watch an entire livestream? Do they watch the sermon later throughout the week? How many people use your app to volunteer, give, or join small groups?

In other words, are people making a commitment to connect with your church and get engaged?

At its core, this metric offers insight into how effectively new members of your church are growing in their faith. This number will be affected by how well your church markets itself through digital channels, the quality of your online experience, and the content you share.

Questions to Ask:

- How is your digital front door—your website, social media pages, or mobile app—performing? Are these platforms user-friendly, engaging, and informative? Do they encourage new members to explore more about your community and services?
- Can you compare the performance of your digital front door to attendance, or another metric you've decided to emphasize? This question helps you align your digital strategies with your on-ground activities, ensuring consistency and effectiveness across all platforms.
- Are new guests greeted warmly and made to feel welcome? Are they invited to join programs or events that match their interest or passions?

How to Refine Your Strategy:

Start by re-evaluating your digital first impression. The first interaction new members have with your church, often digitally, is crucial. The Church Online reported that one-third of churchgoers first found their current church online.

If your website is outdated or your social media pages are inactive, it sends a negative message. Instead, your online presence should be welcoming, up-to-date, and provide all the necessary information a new visitor might need. Include when and where to watch your services, contact information, or a brief introduction to your ministry. The goal is to make newcomers feel welcomed and encouraged to explore further.

Then, make sure you have an effective follow-up strategy in place for those who visit your church in-person or virtually. A warm welcome and a friendly reminder to join the online church community can go a long way in helping new members feel like part of the family and stay engaged.

Community Health

Most of the statistics churches track relate to what's going on within four walls.

But the Church is not just about gathering inside a building or behind stained glass windows. It's about going out into the world—whether that's your nearby neighbors or other nations.

So, what metrics could you track to see if your church is making a positive difference in your neighborhood?

Investigate metrics like time spent volunteering, the amount of resources raised for charity events, or even changes in crime rates, graduation rates, or divorce rates. Tracking these changes can help in creating a more friendly, responsive, and dynamic church environment.

Community data points are tricky to measure. No denying that. But their qualitative nature doesn't diminish their importance. They hold a wealth of information about the pulse of your congregation. They can tell you about the changing needs, attitudes, and aspirations within your church community.

Questions to Ask:

- What are you hearing in your community through word of mouth?
- What local needs does your church have an opportunity to address?
- How can you become more involved and active in your surrounding community?
- What's changing in your community, and can you tie that to the efforts of your ministry?

How to Refine Your Strategy:

Consider launching targeted campaigns that address specific needs within your community. These campaigns could focus on anything from poverty alleviation to mental health support.

Also, make sure that your church isn't just reacting to community needs, but also actively engaging to create solutions. This could include initiatives like starting a youth mentorship program, partnering with local businesses for job training programs, and other ventures.

If you're not sure what needs exist in your community, you can gather data the old-fashioned way and engage in face-to-face interactions. Hold community meetings, participate in local events, or even host casual meetups. Short, frequent surveys are also a great way to stay informed on local needs and give members an opportunity to express themselves. The direct insights you gain can help you shape your campaigns in a more personalized and impactful way. And the data collected first-hand often carries nuances and subtleties that might get lost in digital interactions.

It's about getting back to the roots of community—genuine, sincere, and personal connection.

Viewership Matching Your Strategy

Streaming became a widely adopted practice during the pandemic, providing an essential channel of connectivity in a time of isolation and distancing. However, as we move forward, is a cursory approach to streaming enough?

The answer, quite frankly, is no. The quality of your streams, reflected in the tools and equipment you use, plays a significant role in enhancing engagement. But even the highest quality streams can fall flat without an intentional, strategic plan guiding the content.

The level of strategy in your streams aligns with the number of views your streams get, and how long users will spend watching. That's why you need a plan that aligns with your viewership goals, understands your audience's needs, and outlines a streaming schedule and content that resonates. It's about being intentional with every stream, every interaction, every connection.

Questions to Ask:

- Are you utilizing high-quality cameras and other equipment to provide a professional, immersive streaming experience? Remember, the quality of your stream can significantly influence viewership and engagement.
- Is there an opportunity to expand beyond the topics or content format you're currently offering?

- Are you broadcasting on YouTube, Facebook, or directly on your website? Or perhaps a combination of these? Each platform has strengths to fuel your church, but it's vital to understand their nuances and tailor your strategy accordingly.
- How many people are watching your livestream and simulated live services? How long are they watching for? How many viewers are new or returning? What type of device are they watching from?

How to Refine Your Strategy:

Engage your team in a discussion about your streaming vision. It's essential to have a shared understanding and alignment on your goals for streaming. Are you aiming to reach a wider audience, foster better community interaction, or provide a more immersive worship experience? Discussing these questions with your team can help define your strategy and guide your decisions about which platforms to use, the type of equipment needed, and how to optimize your streams for better engagement.

Stability is the cornerstone of your stream. It's what keeps the connection between you and your viewers strong (literally), especially for those just starting to engage with your church. If you're facing network interruptions, dropped streams or frequent buffering, this can dramatically impact the viewer experience. Re-evaluating the performance and quality of your service and hardware may be a good next step as you measure success.

With a blend of high-quality streams and a well-thought-out strategy, you'll reach further, engage deeper, and build stronger connections with your audience.

Driving Further Engagement

You know that livestreaming expands your church's reach and helps foster a sense of community even with those who physically can't attend. But how can you ensure online viewers take the next step in engagement? How can you move them from passive watchers to active participants in your ministry?

Setting specific and measurable goals for your streaming activities and online church is crucial. These could vary from increasing the time spent watching, to boosting donations, to moving online churchgoers toward in-person participation. With clear goals in mind that align with your ministry's vision, you'll have a tangible target to work towards and a clear guide for creating your new engagement strategies.

Questions to Ask:

- Are your current processes optimized for reaching your goals? For instance, if your goal is to increase time spent watching, is your content engaging enough to keep viewers tuned in? If your goal is to boost donations, are you providing a clear call-to-action, paired with a seamless and easy-to-use online donation platform?
- How effectively are you moving online churchgoers toward in-person participation? Are you regularly communicating the benefits and unique experiences of in-person participation to your online congregation?

How to Refine Your Strategy:

To move online churchgoers toward in-person participation, use your digital platforms to consistently highlight the unique experience and sense of community that in-person participation offers. You could share testimonials from members who attend in-person, or have special segments during online services that give a glimpse into the in-person church experience.

Driving further engagement is a continuous process of setting goals, evaluating your strategies, and refining them for better outcomes. This approach ensures that your church is always growing and improving in its mission to make disciples within the community.

What Can't Be Measured

Numbers and metrics are a big part of understanding how your church is doing, but it's equally important to remember that sometimes, numbers really can't tell the whole story. Certain elements of your ministry can't be quantified, but they leave a deep and lasting impact. The heart of your ministry—transforming lives and nurturing disciples— isn't necessarily something that can be captured in a dataset.

Just think about the stories that have unfolded within your community. Stories of faith renewed, hope ignited, and lives beautifully transformed. These narratives may not be captured in your metrics, but they are a true testament to your ministry's impact. They embody the essence of your mission and vision, and paint a vivid picture of your church's unique journey.

Celebrate every story, every number, and every person. When you make those personal stories a central part of your communication strategy, you (and your community) will start to see the real impact of your ministry, and God moving within your church. They might not fit neatly into a spreadsheet, but they are the heart and soul of your mission and what truly matter.

Nurturing your community and bringing people into the life of the Church is the calling of every ministry leader. Pushpay and Resi share that mission.

Twelve years ago, Pushpay was founded to bridge the gap between in-person and online giving for churches. We've since expanded our digital suite of tools—most recently to include Resi's industry-leading livestreaming and video on demand solutions—but the core, the heart of our mission has never wavered. Everything we discuss and explore, develop and provide for churches like yours is rooted in helping you achieve your vision.

In that spirit, and in case it wasn't clear before: we take analytics pretty seriously—but only because of their power for transforming churches and the communities they serve. We've seen what our dashboards and analytics have done for so many ministries. And we're nowhere close to done; we've got a feature release on the horizon that promises to deliver actionable insights like no other church tech provider ever has.

We'd love to tell you more. Use the link below to schedule time with one of our team members to discuss the unique needs of your ministry, and together we'll explore how to make your vision a reality.

Request Demo



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