

Meagan Ranson ([00:02](#)):

Welcome to the church field podcast, insanely practical conversations with real pastors and real church leaders to equip you to lead healthy and growing churches.

Meagan Ranson ([00:20](#)):

[Inaudible]

Meagan Ranson ([00:25](#)):

Hello everyone. Welcome back to the church field podcast. I'm your host, Megan Ranson. And joining me today is church fuel founder and CEO. Michael [inaudible] took me six years to figure out how to say your name. You've done it so well, but we're here. And the last episode, which was really just like a teaser, we mentioned how this season was going to be a completely different format than previous seasons. We recorded a conversation with no-no Jones, author of social media, to social ministry, pastor of open door ministries about digital strategy a few weeks ago. And we're going to break that conversation up into three episodes so that Michael and I can kind of dissect what Nona had to say and give you some practical steps to use for your ministry.

Michael Lukaszewski ([01:05](#)):

Yeah. So we're going to try this, you know, and I think what this allows us to do is, is, is to take really some really pretty insightful comments from guests and dig a little deeper, right? Pull out the principles, pull out the action steps. And so in this episode, we're going to talk about what we mean when we use this phrase digital strategy. And you're going to hear a lot about that from Churchill and even the coming months. And we're going to talk about why caring about this is not only really central to the gospel, but it's really critical for the health and effectiveness of your church. So let's get started by actually taking a listen to what Nona had to say. And then Meagan, and I'll come back on at the end of the interview to talk about it in that a little deeper.

Meagan Ranson ([01:53](#)):

Hello, everybody. Welcome to the church fuel podcast today. We have the infamous the wonderful, fantastic no-no Jones today. No, no, thank you so much for being here.

Nona Jones ([02:04](#)):

Oh my gosh. Thank you for having me. I'm so excited and looking forward to this conversation,

Meagan Ranson ([02:08](#)):

I think this is going to be an incredible valuable resource to not just people who are members of church fuel, but people who are just listening in, I think anybody who's involved in leadership and ministry, you know, needs to know about how to do the things we're going to talk about today and digital strategy.

Nona Jones ([02:25](#)):

I agree with you. Yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([02:28](#)):

Before we jump into like the details of our conversation, just I always love, and I'm always interested to hear about people personally, before we dive into the professional wisdom that you have. So like, are you working on anything super exciting lately?

Nona Jones ([02:45](#)):

Well, you know I have been really busy because over the last year with COVID and how it has affected churches, being able to, you know, do the traditional model of, I've just had a lot of inbound requests from people like, Hey, how do we do this? And so you know, my, I released my book from social media to social ministry last year. And I think that created a bit of a paradigm shift for, for many people. And so I'm continuing to push that out and try to get it as far out into the world as possible. Other than in addition to that, I also have a leadership Academy, which is not based on social technology. It's really about it's a practice that I call trauma informed leadership, which is basically helping leaders heal from past hurts so that they can show up in the full purpose that God has for them in a healthy way. Wow.

Meagan Ranson ([03:43](#)):

I think that's something that is going to be really helpful trauma informed leadership. I don't know that I've heard of anything like that out there, but I definitely know a lot of stories where that would be really helpful.

Nona Jones ([03:55](#)):

Thank you.

Meagan Ranson ([03:57](#)):

What's your favorite book and you can't answer your own book or the Bible cause that's cheating.

Nona Jones ([04:03](#)):

No cheating. I think, I think like every Christian has to say the Bible or else something happens now, but I, I think in addition to the Bible, of course I have so many, I read, I read like about a book a week, but there is a book by a guy named Greg McKeon. It's called a centralism. And I really love it. It's a centralism, the disciplined pursuit of less. I read it at least annually to help me really focus on how I'm spending my time. Make sure that I'm clear on my priorities and you know, not allowing myself to get kind of sucked into things because I feel obligated, but because I really feel like that's where I'm called in that season. So yeah. That's yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([04:45](#)):

That's so good. I just finished John Mark Comer's book about like end hustle, which is really super, super similar about slowing down and taking your time and not like being in the race. It's not about hustle. It's about rest and connection and how to like simplify things and taking a Sabbath for example. And

Nona Jones ([05:07](#)):

I'm gonna add that to the list. Oh you should.

Meagan Ranson ([05:09](#)):

You should. Okay. So let's dig into what we're going to be talking about today. You wrote a book from social media to social ministry, which is like the best phrase to come out of 2020. I think like we all need

to wrap our minds around the concept of social ministry. So let's just start with like thinking through like digital strategy, let's start with, what do you think digital strategy isn't because so much about what we do, isn't about adding things on it's about eliminating things. So like what is it not

Nona Jones ([05:41](#)):

Well? So we, we use the word strategy, I think interchangeably with what we really mean tactics. You know, and, and the difference is, you know, tactics are what, a strategy, really a combination of both why and how, right. So I often think that when it comes to digital strategy, we focus so much on the what, like I've actually had several ministries send me their digital strategy and it's basically a calendar it's like, all right, we're going to post this on this day. At this time, we're gonna post this on this day at this time. But your, your digital strategy should always begin with why are we even in this space? You know, we, we feel like we need to, I was actually thinking about this and I was running this morning, you know, many churches say, well, I just feel like we need to have a presence online.

Nona Jones ([06:33](#)):

And I'm like, do you need to have a presence online? Or do you need to have a ministry online? Because those are two very different things. And I think strategy starts with the question, why are we here? And then, you know, how are we going to leverage these different platforms in order to accomplish the why? And so, yeah, I try to get people to think that way versus just launching into, Oh, you know, for example, now clubhouse is a new platform that a lot of people are exploring and they're like, Oh, it's audio. Okay. Maybe we just, you know put the audio of our sermons on there. Oh no, maybe we take a step back. And we think about what the possibilities are and why we would be on this platform in the first place. What's our role.

Meagan Ranson ([07:23](#)):

I had a, we had a conversation on season one of this podcast with Liz Bohannon who runs Sseko designs. And she talked about holding your why in one hand and your how, and the other hand and how you have to release, but your why stays the same and that it allows you to filter in what makes sense and what doesn't make sense, because you don't have to show up everywhere. Right.

Nona Jones ([07:48](#)):

So true. And you shouldn't, and you haven't been called to every space. So you have to know why, why are you there? What is it that you're going to accomplish by you being there? And it's not just about having it again, it's not just about having a presence. I mean, I think I call it a straddled strategy where you're everywhere at all times, but if you're everywhere at all times, you're really nowhere.

Nona Jones ([08:21](#)):

Most church's digital strategy is really just a collection of loosely affiliated tactics that are held together with buzzwords, but you don't need to copy those tactics from the mega church down the street, or subscribe to some new digital tool or platform. What you do need is five weeks of focus. That'll help you lay a solid foundation. It's a digital strategy to hold everything together. We're launching a brand new course. It's called the digital strategy course. It'll give you a five-step process. You can follow all held together with a one page template, get on the wait list at [churchfield.com/digitalstrategy](http://churchfield.com/digitalstrategy).

Meagan Ranson ([08:58](#)):

I love that you're using the word presence. That's that's like, that's my actual, next question was why does having a digital presence or digital strategy matter? Like why is it important that we aren't just focused on our buildings and bringing people in person and connecting in face to face? Like why does being online matter?

Nona Jones ([09:16](#)):

Yeah, well, it's so interesting how God works. So February of 2020, I was heading to London. I think it was like February. I don't know it was February the fourth. I was heading to London. And the reason I know that date is because the day before on February 3rd burner research Institute released their 20, 20 state of the church report. And I had saved it on my iPad because I was planning to read it in flight. And so, you know, we, we take off and we're in the air and I was like, Oh, let me pull this thing out. So I started reading through it and there was a section of the report that was a survey. It was asking pastors, what were the top concerns on their mind? It was a list of like 22 things. Well, at the very top of the list, the thing that was most pressing to pastors was a concern about watered down gospel teaching.

Nona Jones ([10:06](#)):

And, you know, that makes sense. I mean, of course we should be concerned about that. Well, as I read down the list, I got down to number 21. This is a, like one from the bottom. And the 21st thing on pastors minds out of 22 was a concern about disruptions to the traditional model of church such as online church. So that was like, that was next. Yeah. Next to the last thing on our mind. And then the very last thing on their mind couldn't get any further down the list was a concern about trends in digital technology. And I, I think it was telling that less than a month later every church on earth had to close its doors and go online in order to exist. And so suddenly the thing that was last on people's minds became first on people's minds.

Nona Jones ([10:58](#)):

But I think even more than, than that, I think the reason why this matters is, you know, right here in the United States, you know, two out of three churches are either declining or plateauing in attendance, two out of three, that's a significant number. It's a huge number. And a lot of times we focus on the mega churches. We're like, Oh my gosh, look at how many new campuses they have and look at how many people they have. Yeah. But those are like 0.0, 1% of all churches, the vast majority of churches are dying and they're dying because one there's of course an issue of relevancy. But I think too it's because people don't feel compelled to get in their car on a Sunday and drive to a building. And so I think being online does two things. One, it needs people where they are, which matters. But I think too, it recognizes the potential. There is a vast sea of people in the digital mission field who don't even know that they need Jesus and they're not going to walk in your church to find out. So you have to meet them where they are.

Meagan Ranson ([11:59](#)):

One of the things that you talk about in your book that I, I thought was so good. And just a really great reminder was that most church growth isn't happening because people are coming from the community and to churches it's because people are leaving and you referred to churches as aquariums, they're leaving one, one aquarium to the other. And I just, I see that like being in church, you know, somebody new comes, Oh, great. How did you hear about us? Well, I used to go to such-and-such church, you know? And it's like, Oh no, it's not, that's not going, that's not going to sustain. And that's us, that's not reaching our community either. Like, that's our mission,

Nona Jones ([12:36](#)):

That's our mission. And it's, it's really for me it has, it has been disheartening. I'm so glad that, that now we have so many churches that have leaned into this because they had to, but beforehand it was disheartening. Cause I would, I would go and I would you know, meet with pastors and I would talk about my passion for digital discipleship and how I wanted to help them. Re-Imagine social technology as a lever for ministry. And they would say things like, Oh yeah, that's cool. That's cool. Hey, can you get me verified? Like, right. That's the concern check Mark. So I was like, wow. So yeah, I'm, I'm, I'm glad that people's minds have now expanded to include the opportunity to reach people in the digital landscape.

Meagan Ranson ([13:22](#)):

Right. So I love that you're talking about people, churches specifically needing to show up and have a presence because people are looking online for answers and the answers that they're getting are missing out on Jesus. And so showing up there is really important because we have, we have the, the only answer that is really going to bring life and freedom and move people towards relationship. So yeah, I'm off my soap box now. We're good.

Nona Jones ([13:52](#)):

Good

Meagan Ranson ([13:58](#)):

Strategy. Something that you think you should just like weave into your current strategy, should it take over, should we be all in and just, you know, forget about the in-person stuff and just go in on online or like, what do you think that should look like? How do we integrate it into what we're currently doing?

Nona Jones ([14:13](#)):

Well, I, so I would encourage people before you try to integrate it into your current process, I would encourage you to think what you could do that you cannot do in your current process, because remember, you know, typically our current ministry or traditional ministry process is tied to a date, time and location. Well, when you're in the digital space, now you don't have those constraints. So, you know, what could you do if a date, time and location was not a deciding factor, what would that look like? And you know, what, what would you do if your ministry was suddenly global, suddenly had global reach? The reason I ask that question is because it does, it already has global reach, you know the, the online community that our church has on Facebook. I mean, we have people in our community.

Nona Jones ([15:07](#)):

We live in Florida and all types of States around the country and other places in the world. And we would have no way to know these people had it not been for that. So first I would encourage you to just, you know, allow your imagination to, to run free and think, what could we do if we weren't constrained by date, time and location. Secondly, what I would recommend is think about how a social technology can be an extension of what you're already doing. So for example, let's say you have a women's ministry and maybe you have, you know, a conference that you do annually or quarterly. Well, you know, that's one moment in time, maybe it's a few hours. That's wonderful. Well, social technology is open 168 hours per week. So how do you extend that experience into something that people can enjoy and continue to learn from and grow from over the, over the coming days and coming weeks and coming months where they don't have to come to a building in order to be, be part of that process. So I, I do, I

like to tell people, look, you got white space, use the white space, think through what would you do if you didn't have any limitations or restrictions and and try to think, to think along those lines. [inaudible]

Michael Lukaszewski ([16:37](#)):

So Meagan, I love that, that interview. I love that conversation. And I thought there were some really great points there that known it may particularly the stuff about strategy and about how lacking sometimes churches can be with strategy. And I've seen this, I know you've seen this churches, you know, say like here's our strategy and what they really mean is now we have a content calendar or no, we have a, we have some goals or

Meagan Ranson ([17:00](#)):

We're just showing up. We're just doing things

Michael Lukaszewski ([17:03](#)):

Stuff, right. And so activities are not the same as strategy. And I love this, this context because we, we need really to step back and think, why are we doing what we're doing and what are we actually doing? And then how do we do it? And so knowing, I mentioned that I think she, when she said that strategy, really, it has to have a little bit of why. But it really needs to answer the question. How, like, how are we planning to do these things?

Michael Lukaszewski ([17:28](#)):

Yeah, for sure. And one of the things that I thought was really interesting that she said, we were talking about the why and the, how was that church growth isn't happening because new people are going to church. Like it's not happening because our community is deciding, Oh, I really want to step into this building today if they're growing, because people are just like jumping from one church to the other. I mean, I've experienced that just as someone attending church, most of the new people are people who decided to switch where they're, where they're going,

Michael Lukaszewski ([17:56](#)):

Which is so important that you define the why and the strategy part, because, you know, here's what a strategy is. And I've done a lot of reading and a lot of research on strategy, you know, as we're, we're releasing a course on digital strategy we just took our church thrill, fuel team through defining and creating a new strategy for how we're running things. So, so I've been living in the strategy world for, for awhile, and I've always known it's important, but what happens in churches is if we don't ever define where we're going, right, what the goal is, then it's really hard to create a strategy. And so then what we do is we just start chasing all these different tactics around, Oh, let me sign up for this. Let me sign up for this. Let me do that. Let me do that. And that's actually a recipe to be tired.

Michael Lukaszewski ([18:35](#)):

It's not a recipe for how to be effective. And so what you just said about people just swapping churches, most churches never think through all the way to the end, who are we trying to reach? How are we trying to reach them? What specifically are we trying to do? So they just measure attendance or they measure how many people are watching the Facebook lives. And they go, well, we got more people than we had, you know, six weeks ago. But they're not really the people we're trying to reach. That is a strategic problem, not a tactic problem.

Meagan Ranson ([19:02](#)):

What does that look like? Is that something that comes easily to people? Or is that something that like, are most pastors like, Oh yeah, I know what my, what my end goal is. I can come up with that.

Michael Lukaszewski ([19:10](#)):

Yeah. So, no, it's very, it's very hard because most pastors and most churches define the, in its vague, vague and esoteric language, like change the world or reach the community you know, that kind of stuff. And that's great. That's like this big bowl of these big, big Lang you know, this big language in it and that's good, that's fine, but it's not specific. And nobody can tell whether you've done it or not. It's hard to measure. Are we being effective or any of those things? So, you know, from the, from the simplest and I would say the shallow ascend, it could be, you know, increase attendance from X to Y is a, is a clear strategy. I mean, I mean that, I mean, that's a clear end that you can create a strategy to now. I think that's a little bit weak and we can probably do better.

Michael Lukaszewski ([19:56](#)):

And so then we can get into other things of like, what does discipleship look like? How do we measure that? So what Jesus said is that where it goes is supposed to go into all the world and make disciples. And so our metric should really be around how well we do that. And that should be the end. Can your goals change? Our goal should change. And so what happens? And so we talked about this in Churchill, we have a course called building your ministry plan, and we talk about two different words and we talk about purpose and that should never change, you know, go into all the world, make disciples, that's a purpose. That's why we exist. That should be the same forever. I know you, you know, in other seasons, you've, you've had episodes where we've talked about this, hold on to that purpose pretty tightly, but your mission, which is current, right. Which is this next season, what are we trying to do right now that needs to flex with whatever you're trying to do. Right. And so I always explain that like NASA, you know, space people or start check either one. If you,

Michael Lukaszewski ([20:55](#)):

If you, if you like science fiction, you can

Michael Lukaszewski ([20:57](#)):

Have it be star Trek. But if you like the real world, it could be NASA. Right. What's NASA's purpose. Well to explore space, right. Go and investigate and do all this stuff. Well, it's very big. It's very broad. It's very forever, right. They can't ever do it, but what are they trying to do right now? They're trying to go to Mars. And so you can create a budget. You can build a team, you can hire people, you can build the rockets or get Elon Musk to build your rocket. Or you can, you can like staff around that. And so explore space is a big, broad purpose, never changes go to Mars is a mission and that's time bound. And here's where this intersects with what we're talking about then. And only then can you create a strategy that makes a lot of sense. So now you can build something tangible.

Meagan Ranson ([21:38](#)):

One of the things that Nona and I did not get to talk about was where do you start with your strategy? We talked a lot about what strategy isn't and then what it is, but like where what's the first thing you need to do when you're defining what your strategy looks like?

Michael Lukaszewski ([21:52](#)):

Well, I think so that's a great question. And I think the answer to, you know, where do we start? What do we do almost always starts with getting a handful of the right people together. You can, you can muscle us through just as you know, if you're listening to this, you can sit down and create a draft and, and get some stuff. Right. But what I think you should do is grab a few strategic thinkers people who care about the organization as a whole, and not just a piece of it and get some people together. And I'm a big believer in getting outside perspective. I do this for a living and I still bring people in to help us with this because, you know, it's, there are people that are really good at this.

Meagan Ranson ([22:35](#)):

So like business, like business people in your community, yeah.

Michael Lukaszewski ([22:38](#)):

Business people in your community you know, an outside voice, people that know what's going on. I was reading a book about innovation and how it almost always happens from people at least prodded on by outsiders because insiders think they know what works and what doesn't work. It's the curse of knowledge. And so when you bring this, and so when I talk about getting the right people together, I'm not, I'm not necessarily talking about the same three people that meet in the staff meeting every week to plan the Sunday service. Yeah. Those people have a very important job. They need to plan the Sunday service.

Michael Lukaszewski ([23:10](#)):

Well, and those people also are going to have like very niche perspectives and, and once for the church and the strategy of the church.

Michael Lukaszewski ([23:17](#)):

Yeah. And so, you know, maybe, maybe those people need to be there, but maybe it needs to be some other people in the church who don't live in that, you know, in and out of it, who can say, well, what are we trying to do? What really is that? What's Mars, what's our Mars. And then how do we get there? And so, you know, we talk about this all the time, Megan, inside church fuel, it's so many pastors live in the wow, you know, vision, we're going to change the world, all that stuff. We need some people to live in the how and you know, okay, if we want to do that, step one, two and three here's here's the roadmap. That's what strategy is.

Meagan Ranson ([23:52](#)):

You said something. And I don't know some video, some church feel video. I don't even remember what it was, but I thought this was so good. You said like the local church has the, has the greatest mission. And, and among every organization, we should be the best run organization, every community because of our mission. And I love that. Like, sometimes it's easy to miss that perspective to miss the, you know, we don't want to like lose out on the Holy spirit because we're being too much, we're running our church too much, like a business

Michael Lukaszewski ([24:22](#)):

Week. Right. It feels, yeah, it gets kind

Michael Lukaszewski ([24:24](#)):



Of yucky. But there just goes to say like, we should be good stewards of the things that we have and having a defined strategy and systems is a part of that.

Michael Lukaszewski ([24:34](#)):

Yeah. And I think even as we get into future episodes and kind of dive deeper into what Noah had to say, some of this we'll get that we'll get clearer. But I think the big idea here right now is when we talk about digital strategy, it's not like, Hey, let's sign up for this account. Or let's post this on Tuesday. All of those are tactics. And even Facebook itself is a tool to do a tactic. And those are there's, there's a time and a place to talk about that. But before we get to any of that, we have to back all the way up and go, what are we really trying to do? Who, who are we trying to reach? Are we, are we creating a strategy to communicate to our church members or to, you know, the community? And maybe those are two parallel tracks, but they are different. And so what are we doing? Who's doing it. What does success look like? These are all strategic questions. And until we wrestle with that, and those are hard and those take time, then we end up just spinning our wheels, signing up for new things all the time. That don't matter.

Meagan Ranson ([25:30](#)):

Well, next week in our episode, we are going to be talking about social media as just social ministry, which is the title of known as book. If you haven't checked it out, the beginning is super, super great. We're going to kind of dig into what the first few chapters are about. But before we leave today, is there any last minute things that you want to talk that you want to share, Michael, that we talked about in this episode?

Michael Lukaszewski ([25:51](#)):

I think strategy is for every church, right? So do not fall into the trap of going well. We don't have a thousand people and 15 people on staff to sit around and think about strategy. That is a false, that's a false belief. That is a limiting belief and strategy is simply being a good steward about the vision that God's given you. And so if you, you know, to go back to what you said, Megan, if what you're doing matters, like if the mission matters, if your purpose matters, if your calling matters, if all that stuff matters, and I know it does, then you owe it, right. It is a stewardship issue to pause and go. If this thing matters, how are we going to do it? And how are we going to do it? Well, how, how are we going to measure it? How are we going to be effective?

Michael Lukaszewski ([26:35](#)):

And so having a strategic plan or having a digital strategy is not some, you know, bozo exercise is is a waste of time. If some consultant has convinced you that you need a 50 page document to outline everything and let's call it a strategic plan, that is, that's not what we're talking about. And if you think this is just for big, giant churches who have people that do this for a living, that's not what we're talking about. Right? You need a strategy and a lot of different plans will work. And you just need to get clear about what your plan is.

Meagan Ranson ([27:07](#)):

Absolutely. Well, thanks so much for listening everyone. If you have not liked and subscribe to our podcast, make sure to do that and leave us a review. It helps more people know what's going on and we can help more churches when they know that you also like listening. So leave us a review, let us know

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