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# ***TARGETED TECHNOLOGY: BRIDGING THE GENERATIONS***

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## **Session Description**

The first technological breakthrough may have been a sharp stick by Homo erectus and it seems to have served them well for a couple hundred thousand years, but when it comes to worship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century technological breakthroughs barely last a generation. In this episode Drs. Bill and Kris explore how to bridge the generations in worship.

## **Session Outline**

There is more to targeting the generations than just tweaking your technology. And though this episode is specifically on targeting the generations we simply want to remind you that you have to rethink your complete worship strategy to reach different targets such as:

- Those who grew up in the church and those who've never set foot in a church
- Those who are young and those who are not so young anymore
- Those who appreciate the classics and those who disdain the classics
- Those with different learning styles

Again, a reminder that this session will not touch on worship styles. You can find out more about targeted worship by accessing one of our worship episodes:

- Targeting Worship
- Intergenerational Worship
- Dealing with (and Avoiding) Worship Wars

## **Bridging the Generations**

Although it is possible to bridge technology across multiple generations, the further the leap the more difficult it becomes and the more embedded the technology has to be. However, it is easier to bridge technology than it is style ... we've found no congregations that have successfully cross bridged styles that include more than the immediate preceding or following generations. But bridged technology generally has a different set of parameters.

### **1. Worship Technology and Bridging to the Radio Generation**

The assumption here is that you have a number of Radio Generation worshipers in your congregation but you also have a number from a younger generation OR you have a commitment to reach younger generations.

**Technology Bridge:** The addition of screen technology

**Introduction Helps:** As the Radio Generation ages, eyesight often fails. Introducing screen technology provides a viable alternative to large-print (and large-print stigma).

**Objections:** (A) Inability to see the musical score. (B) Covering up the "cross" or some other sacred furnishing. (C) Cost.

**Responses:** (A) Only an estimated 10% of the population can read music. By singing all or most songs from the hymnals those who can/want to view the score can use them. (B) Move the sacred furnishing or screen locations when possible. Offering to use a retractable screen is disingenuous, since reaching younger generations will demand use of the screen throughout the whole service. When it is not possible to move sacred furnishings or screen location, appeal to reaching children and grandchildren. (C) Screen technology costs have dropped drastically, though it's rarely cheap. The cost of not reaching younger generations is more expensive in the long run (and honestly the short run). A number of denominational publishing houses have either stopped or are considering stopping the publication of hymnals. Not buying future hymnals saves a lot of money ... for both publishing houses and churches.

**Technology Use:** Use screen technology with words. Project lyrics, responsive readings, outline the sermon. Ensure the fonts and colors (contrasts) are easily visible. This is how "most" churches natively use screen technology without specific training.

## **2. Worship Technology and Bridging to the Image Generation**

**Technology Bridge:** The addition of images and video, including live camera feeds

**Introduction Helps:** Make sure images compliment and do not compete with the words on the screen. Use powerful images during communion, offerings, etc. Add video strategically. Make sure illustrative vids are directly and obviously related to your point. Avoid any scenes or vocabulary that could be objectionable. Use live camera feeds to project activities up front that might not be visible from the pews such as Children's Moments, baptisms, etc.

**Objections:** (A) Cheesy or inappropriate videos. (B) Vanity – the preacher's face up on the screen. (C) Cost.

**Responses:** (A) In a word, introduce video a little at a time and be exceptionally judicious with your video selection. (B) Add the sermon videos to your website and point shut-ins, those who've missed a service, etc. to the site. Point out that those in the back cannot view the pastor's facial expressions ... and projected video helps. (C) What is the price for seeing your grandchildren's faces on the screen when they're participating in the children's time? In addition, as stated earlier, the cost of not reaching younger generations is more expensive.

**Technology Use:** Use screen technology with images. Move gently towards a more image-based screen presentation. Add video clips from selected movies, television, YouTube, etc. Check out SermonSpice.com. Create your own videos, particularly interviews and "commercials" using congregational "talent." And see Seth Godin's article on how not to use PowerPoint (or any other presentation software) at [http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths\\_blog/2007/01/really\\_bad\\_powe.html](http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2007/01/really_bad_powe.html).

## **3. Worship Technology and Bridging to the MTV Generation**

**Technology Bridge:** The addition multiple videos, live camera feed, develop a theology of light, and some use of connectedness.

**Introduction Helps:** Increase the use of video strategically. Make sure illustrative vids are directly and obviously related to the service. Use shorter clips with faster transitions. Add lighting strategically (begin by using existing lighting ... as in turning it off, directing it, etc.). Invite use of texting to supplement the service.

**Objections:** (A) Too much/too slick. (B) Can't see to move around (lighting). (C) Cell phones/texting has no place in worship.

**Responses:** (A) Increase the use of video judiciously. (B) Make sure there is enough ambient light. (C) The use of this technology simply acknowledges what is ... and what is not going away. The "kids" are texting anyway, why not focus that use for good? In addition, those who don't want to participate don't have to (and be sure that the use doesn't create an "in" and "out" crowd).

**Technology Use:** The use of video again needs to enhance rather than detract or distract from the message. Be intentional about developing a theology of light (see the article by Chris McMillan at <http://pastorcmac.blogspot.com/2009/05/why-we-do-what-we-do-lighting.html>). Use texting and interconnectivity to enhance the "group" experience.

#### **4. Worship Technology and Bridging to the Digital Generation**

**Technology Bridge:** The addition of connectedness and networking.

**Introduction Helps:** Keep it as embedded as possible.

**Objections:** Technology and the internet has no business in church.

**Responses:** The use of this technology simply acknowledges what is ... and what is not going away. And again, those who don't want to participate don't have to (and be sure that the use doesn't create an "in" and "out" crowd).

**Technology Use:** Start with open access WiFi (or closed access with the login plainly available throughout worship). Get a cell-phone transmission booster if necessary. Then add the use of the most current social media tools. Example is using a Twitter hashtag (do a search for #occdoc to see an example of using the technology in a worship service). Have someone "staff" a smartphone to follow the comments and respond to questions in real time. Some churches may want to display their Twitter feed, Instant Messaging feed, etc. on the screen so that the up fronters can follow it and respond. Create a Resource Page online with links to augment the sermon such as links to alternative scripture translations, hymn or song background stories, alternative views, etc.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. In your church, what is the biggest generation technology gap that you need to bridge?
2. What objections do you think you'll have to deal with?
3. Role play your responses to the likely objections.
4. What do you need to do to bridge your technology gaps?
5. What are you going to do?