# 5 Characteristics of Effective **Mobile Notifications** During a **Crisis**

No doubt about it, an effective use of mobile notifications will turn your church app into the center of your communications strategy, especially in the current times we are faced with regarding COVID-19. But the key word is *effective*.

Whether responding to a natural disaster, a national crisis, or an unexpected emergency—having a plan in place to reach and connect with your people digitally is critical, more specifically through mobile notifications. Just because you use mobile notifications to get the word out to your community doesn't mean it'll work for your church. Your strategy plays a critical role. Having a great mobile app is like someone handing you the keys to a high-performance sports car. The car runs great, but won't drive itself. You'll have to do the driving.

To make the most of your mobile notifications, you need the RIGHT strategy. The right strategy includes:
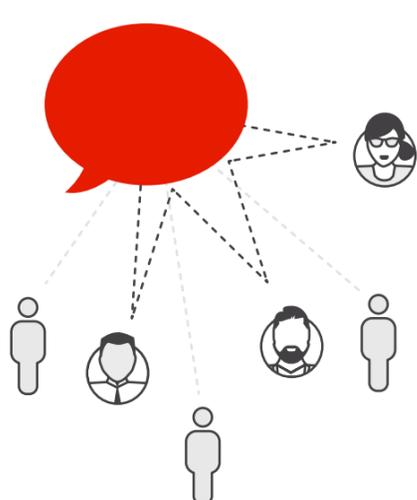
01 The Right Person:

Not everyone in your church needs to get every push notification. If you send too many notifications, you'll turn people off. They may opt out of your notifications or (even worse) delete your church's app.

Most weeks you won't want any one person to receive more than five notifications. That doesn't mean your church will only send out five notifications though. Your mobile app should give you the ability to communicate directly with people who want specific information (i.e. critical updates on service times and meetings, or changes in location). In other words, you may have parents who want updates on children's ministry notifications. If you send out a notification to that group, the people who signed up will be the only ones who get it.

It does you no good to send out a mobile notification to your entire church with information on your ministries unrelated to their interests or concerns. You need to be able to communicate with people who are interested in what you're sharing.

02 Right Place:

Sometimes you'll need to send out notifications that a person can only act upon when they're in a certain location. If you want to send out a notification that allows people to access your weekly bulletin, you don't need people who are regularly at your weekend service to get it. Or, if you need to reach out to people who attend a specific church campus, it makes more sense to target just the people who live nearby.

If you are a multi-campus church, and only one campus has been impacted by the epidemic, send the notification to the impacted group. If appropriate, a tailored note and message of prayer for congregants at other campuses is a nice gesture.

Location-based alerts help you do that. When you use location-based notifications, you're able to send out notifications only to people near a certain location. Of course, this means you aren't bombarding people who don't need or want the content.
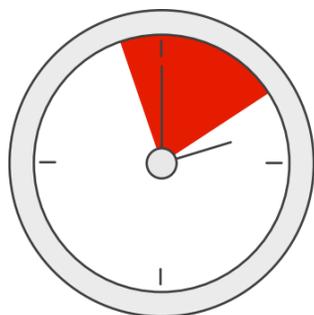
03 Right time:

Your notifications need to come at a time when people can take action upon it. Due to the concerns our nation is currently undergoing, you also don't want to send out notifications at times when they will be annoyances to your users. Most users can't act on your notifications at 2 AM. That's obvious. But you also shouldn't make them act on notifications at 2 PM (in the middle of the work day). Think about when your users are likely to be available to respond to you. If you send out a notification at 2 PM and your users can't act on it until 6 PM, they'll probably forget about it in those four hours.

04 Right Content:

The average person gets 45 push notifications per day. You'd like to think your users would pay special attention to those notifications coming from their church family (and they may), but it's still very easy for your notifications to get lost in the mix. That's why the words you use make a difference. You must get their attention—and get to the point quickly.

Use strong and active verbs whenever possible. Be personable and friendly. Many of the notifications your community gets throughout the day will be trying to sell them something. Be different. You're sharing with family members (not sales targets).

Try to keep your notifications under 100 characters if possible. Go even shorter when you can.

Here are a few talking points to consider:

- How people can stay connected with your church and each other.

- How they can participate while the changes are in effect.

- Share ways to give online and communicate any special funds you've started in response to current events.

- Direct people to your app where they can stay connected to everything that's happening and remind them to opt-in to push notifications so they never miss a moment to participate.

Pay attention to the kinds of notifications to whom your community responds. If your community acts on certain kinds of notifications that are worded in a specific way, use that notification as a template for others.
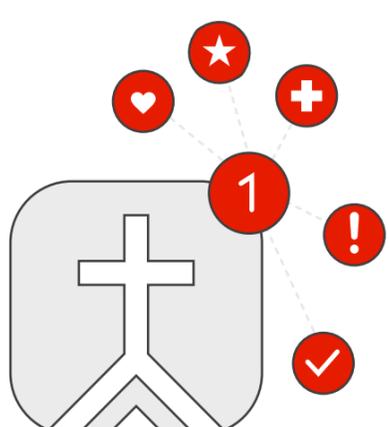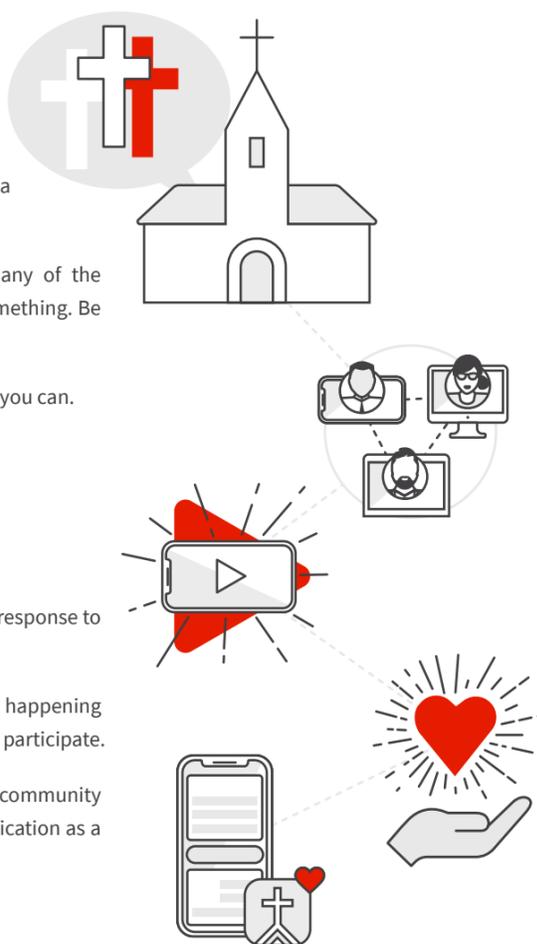
05 Right Action:

Most of your notifications won't be designed just to pass information along to your app users. They're designed to help them take an action. Sometimes those actions aren't on the app at all. At times, you want your users to join a live sermon or pray for something specific. They must perform those actions outside of your app.

But most notifications can have intermediate actions a user can take on in your app. Intermediate actions might mean asking people to digitally give or view a prayer list. An effective mobile notification strategy will give people an action to complete as often as possible.

The notifications in this resource will give you a head start in establishing a strategy that reaches the right person, in the right place, at the right time, with the right content, and encourages them to take the right action. But, ultimately, you'll want to edit them to fit your specific need and context.

Ready to talk to an expert about how to get the best tools and technology set up for you to make the pivot to digital? Get in touch with us now.

Talk to an expert