

From Media to Movements:



Study Suggests Best Practices and Room to Grow



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Since 2018, a coalition of ministries has trained hundreds in the use of modern media marketing tools to pursue an ancient, New Testament mandate—to make disciples who make disciples. These days, the COVID-19 crisis is opening many eyes to the potential of such digital media ministry strategies. Now, a new study of what training participants have done with what they learned shows encouraging results.

About Media to Movements

Media to Movements (MTM) is an application of DMM (Disciple Making Movement) strategy, so it is also known as Media to Disciple Making Movements (MTDMM). Practitioners offer as many people as possible the invitation to explore and respond to scripture along with others in their networks. They follow up with those who are spiritually open and willing to introduce the gospel into their community—often referred to as people of peace (Luke 10:5-7).

To pursue this end, MTM practitioners harness social media to find and engage spiritually open people and invite them into a discipleship process, working intentionally toward personal contact. Ultimately, this process can help birth a dynamic, disciple-making gospel movement within their community.

“How did I not think of this?” said a cross-cultural worker now using MTM strategies. “You know, I’m a millennial. I see my friends spending five, six, seven hours a day on social media. This was obvious ... it was [a] strategic and scalable approach to gospel sharing and searching for persons of peace.”

A Study of MTM Training Participants

A coalition of six organizations and networks offering MTM training programs collectively trained up to 600 people over several years, with some participants attending multiple training programs. Recently they commissioned a study to see what was happening. Were participants applying MTM principles? Were they



seeing media-initiated disciple-making movements or other ministry fruit from their new strategies? What were the best practices of those who implemented the training, and what else might they need to bear lasting fruit? The coalition worked with Dr. Frank Preston, a colleague with expertise in researching the use of media to foster making disciples, to design a process for finding out.

Preston and the coalition developed a questionnaire and sent it to roughly 600 people in November and December 2019. They hoped for at least 125 responses and received 129 (22 percent). About two thirds identified themselves as “expatriates” and about a fourth considered themselves “nationals.” Participants represented several organizations working among unreached populations in numerous countries, though a majority worked in the Middle East or Southeast Asia, and 73% were engaged in outreach to Muslims. Ten of those who completed the survey were selected for follow-up interviews. Preston and others coded and analyzed the data and published a report in April 2020.

An encouraging number of those surveyed are implementing what they learned in the training. More than half of those said it has made a significant impact in their work. None have yet seen the kind of fruit that might be described as a media-initiated disciple-making movement. Still, 41% reported an increase in the number of people they were engaging, while others mentioned a higher number of conversions, reproducing disciples, or growth in their ministries than they had seen before.

Best Practices

The study showed four characteristics or best practices among those implementing MTM strategies.

1. They were motivated and intentionally did their homework. Most were trained and began implementing media strategies because they were dissatisfied with their level of fruitfulness and wanted to be more effective. After the training, these participants developed plans and integrated these plans into team strategies. They researched the digital platforms and media consumption patterns of the communities they wanted to reach. Many went through more than one training program or accessed other resources. In contrast, those who attended training at the direction of a supervisor were less likely to do any of these things.



2. They were cross-trained and coached. Recognizing their need for help, more than half of those who implemented MTM strategies had someone coaching them, formally or informally. Some had multiple coaches and mentors to help them with questions, challenges and next steps. Especially when difficult issues emerged, these practitioners sought help where they could find it. The majority had no media background or previous training in social media marketing. Yet they pursued the new skills they needed.

3. They collaborate with those outside their team. The survey suggests the top two obstacles many faced in implementing MTM strategies were a lack of teammates and a lack of local partners. A significant number found ways to address those challenges by linking arms with other teams, national believers and local churches. Essentially, they redefined “team” to include these other partners.

4. They weren't afraid to “just start” and try things. Developing a media strategy can be a daunting process, and social and media dynamics change often. In addition, each ministry needs to develop a plan that takes their context, capacity, timeframe, budget and security concerns into consideration. Yet when asked what advice they would give others, many participants in the survey said, “just do it” and “experiment.” As one explained, “It’s really all about trial and error. Don’t be afraid to change things or try things temporarily to see what kind of results you may get. Don’t be discouraged if you have to change the way you originally thought.”

Training and Implementation Gaps

While MTM training and implementation seem off to a good start, the study identified several areas where participants could use more help in order to implement their strategies or see more fruit.

1. More training in how to use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. A CRM is essentially a follow-up management system (FMS). In this context, it helps media contacts from falling through the gaps and provides internal accountability within the team and the assigned disciple maker. This CRM or FMS provides real-time qualitative data that reflects the seeker’s spiritual milestones, such as, received a Bible, reading Bible, states belief, can share gospel or testimony, sharing gospel or testimony, baptized, in church/group, and making disciples. Among those who use an FMS, few use it their fullest capacity.



2. Better understanding of disciple-making movement (DMM) goals. A small percentage of any population is spiritually open and willing to share the gospel in their communities. Identifying these persons of peace is essential to see multiplication and ultimately movements happen. This study suggests many who use MTM strategies are not applying DMM principles and therefore are unclear on how to encourage contacts toward maturity. Many would benefit from more help applying DMM practices in passing off field contacts. This would also encourage more robust reproduction.

3. Need for a “help desk.” Each stage of implementation of an MTM strategy has its challenges, from understanding and applying key principles of ministry strategy and understanding an audience to learning the skills of content creation and data management. Many in this study could use help to overcome technical challenges and keep up with the changing rules of social media platforms. This study suggests many would benefit from the creation of a help center or knowledge pool where they could find quick answers and help to overcome specific problems they encounter.

“Given that the skill sets of most practitioners are not in technology nor communications, having a help center could match field workers with experts who could guide them through complex issues,” concludes the study.

Learn More

For a more complete report on this research and more informant about Media to Movements, watch the Executive Summary at visualstory.org/mtmsurvey.

Are you interested in learning how you can accelerate a movement among a certain people group? Contact us through the website mediatomovements.org or by email at info@mediatomovements.org.

Media to Movements Training Coalition

