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Midwest Jesuits

"State of the Union" Social Media Report

OUTLINE

The Midwest Jesuits currently utilize Facebook and Twitter as the primary social media channels to reach its audience. These platforms are used to share news, articles and other content relevant to the Jesuit community not only in the Midwest, but also across the country. This report details current efforts of the Midwest Jesuits social media channels; looks into what the channels are doing well and not well; suggests future efforts on said channels; examines the potential usefulness of other social networks; and asks what the Midwest Jesuits are trying to achieve on social media.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content

Midwest Jesuits posts include daily prayers from JesuitPrayer.org; links to relevant news within the Jesuit and Catholic communities; engaging articles and posts from popular blogs and magazines; job postings, events and other news targeted to the Midwest; updates from Jesuit schools, colleges and universities; links to relevant political and international affairs news; and other various content curated from outside sources.

This wide spectrum of posts has proven to be a great mix of content that keeps posts current and relevant to audiences of various demographics. Content is often retrofitted and shared across both Facebook and Twitter, resulting in mirrored content. While this is not a negative feature, the social media world is divided on whether or not posts should be mirrored, so it could be a good idea to try Twitter-exclusive and Facebook-exclusive posts.

Sources

To establish the Midwest Jesuits social media channels as a daily source of Jesuit news and faith resources, quality content is often curated from other digital channels. These outside sources include:

Websites

- Jesuits.org
- Jesuitsmidwest.org

Social Media: Facebook



- Jesuit Conference USA (www.facebook.com/Jesuits)
- Jesuit Refugee Service (www.facebook.com/JesuitRefugeeService)
- Ignatian Spirituality Project (www.facebook.com/IgnatianSpiritualityProject)
- Ignatian Solidarity Network (<https://www.facebook.com/IgnatianSolidarity>)

Social Media: Twitter

- @Pontifex (twitter.com/pontifex)
- @LoyolaPress (twitter.com/loyolapress)
- @JesuitNews (twitter.com/jesuitnews)
- @JamesMartinSJ (twitter.com/JamesMartinSJ)

Publications and Blogs

- The Jesuit Post (thejesuitpost.org)
- Busted Halo (bustedhalo.com)
- America Magazine (americamagazine.org)

CHANNEL ANALYSIS

Facebook

- **URL:** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Midwest-Jesuits/156650871043548>
- **Profile name:** Midwest Jesuits
- **Followers:** 23,606 (as of 3.9.15)
- **Last activity:** 3.9.15

The Midwest Jesuits Facebook page garnered 23,606 likes as of March 9, 2015. The Midwest Jesuits continue to hold a significantly larger Facebook following than the Jesuit Conference USA, which has a total of 5,454 likes at the time of review. However, the Midwest Jesuits' Facebook following is smaller than the following for Busted Halo (39.3k), 3 Minute Retreat (33k) and the Society of Jesus (29.9k).

The Facebook page is regularly updated, with an average of two posts each day (one daily prayer message in the morning and a news item in the afternoon). Most audience engagement with the Midwest Jesuits Facebook page comes in the forms of likes and shares of recent posts, as the number of comments on posts remains quite low (though January saw an increase in the number of comments). Up until December 2014, obituary posts were found to have generated the highest number of comments, though now the daily prayer posts account for both the highest number of comments and the highest number of likes.

February saw a (comparatively) low level of page activity, adding just seven new page likes between February 8 and February 24. At the time of review, the Midwest Jesuits Facebook page's total reach for February was around 52,400.

Why are we using this social media account?



- The Midwest Jesuits are using Facebook in order to maximize reach of Ignatian spirituality, multimedia content, and Jesuit resources. Facebook is the #1 social media platform in the world and drives most of the traffic on the web, so involvement is crucial.

Why do we want to use it?

- The Midwest Jesuits want to use Facebook in order to grow JesuitPrayer.org and to enhance relationships with existing and new friends.

What are we doing well on Facebook?

- **Regular posting schedule.** At least one new item is posted each and every day, demonstrating at the very least that this is an important channel to the Midwest Jesuits. The regular schedule is especially important for the daily prayer messages; I'm willing to bet that a sizeable number of the page's overall fanbase visits the page every morning just for them.
- **Daily prayer messages.** This has turned out to be a fantastic and near-essential component of the Midwest Jesuits' Facebook page. They clinch the "most valuable post" award almost every day, as they usually result in the highest number of likes, comments and reach.
- **Consistent voice.** While the current voice doesn't have a ton of personality behind it, it is professional and extremely consistent. It would be a good idea to adopt a younger voice to connect with the page's newfound youthful following.

What do we need to improve on Facebook?

- **Voice.** As aforementioned above, while the current voice isn't doing any damage, it also isn't helping draw youngsters out of the woodwork and into the comment section. We should start to experiment with new language moving forward.
- **Engagement.** By Facebook's definition of engagement, the page is doing quite well; almost 24k fans, daily reach that almost always falls in the thousands and constant likes/comments. While it's great to focus on increasing the audience's engagement with us, we must also increase **our** engagement with the audience. There has been a slight effort in this regard, but nothing adequate. We need to respond to more comments on daily prayer and news posts and not shy away from responding to a touchy/controversial comments. We should also think about implementing new content ideas designed to draw conversation out of our audience (a weekly question could be a good place to start). Other similar pages should also be tracked and commented on regularly, which could bring new fans to the Midwest Jesuit Facebook page.
- **Double posting.** Nothing major, but occasionally someone will post something immediately (<1 hour) after another post goes live. This has a significant negative impact the reach for both posts, so posts should be spaced out in intervals of at least 2 hours (3-4 hrs is ideal).
- **Tagging posts.** If an organization that has a Facebook page is mentioned in a Midwest Jesuits Facebook post, said organization should always be tagged. This helps to foster a relationship with the page and brings in additional traffic from the other organization's fan base.

What do we need to start doing on Facebook?

- **Video.** The importance of visual content continues to rise, and video is the currently the premiere engagement tool on social media, though it is usually more expensive than simply writing a blog post. Determining a method of visual content creation moving forward will be essential.



- **Create content.** Right now (boiling it down to brass tacks) there are two types of content: daily prayer messages and news items. Creating our own images, video, etc. will drive engagement and liven up the page considerably.

Twitter

- **URL:** <https://twitter.com/midwestjesuits>
- **Profile name:** @MidwestJesuits
- **Followers:** 3,330 (as of 2.25.15)
- **Last activity:** 2.25.15

The Midwest Jesuits Twitter account has a total of 3,330 followers at the time of review. The Twitter account is following a total of 1,700 other users. The gap between the total accounts followed by the Midwest Jesuits and the total accounts following the Midwest Jesuits continues to widen, as unnecessary accounts to follow are gradually unfollowed; over 300 Twitter profiles were unfollowed in February.

The Twitter page is regularly updated, with an average of 1-2 posts each day. In addition, the Midwest Jesuits Twitter account regularly features manual retweets of content from Pope Francis (@Pontifex) and other prominent Jesuit-focused Twitter streams like Jesuit News (@JesuitNews). These regular updates continue to result in a low but steady level of engagement, including regular retweets and favorites.

Why are we using this social media account?

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Why do we want to use it?

- The Midwest Jesuits want to use Twitter in order to grow JesuitPrayer.org and to enhance relationships with existing and new friends.

What are we doing well on Twitter?

- **Regular posting schedule.** At least one new item is posted each and every day, demonstrating at the very least that this is an important channel to the Midwest Jesuits. The regular schedule is especially important for the daily prayer messages; I'm willing to bet that a sizeable number of the page's overall fan base visits the page every morning just for them.
- **Daily prayer messages.** This has turned out to be a fantastic and near-essential component of the Midwest Jesuits' Facebook page. They clinch the "most valuable post" award almost every day, as they usually result in the highest number of likes, comments and reach.

What do we need to improve on Twitter?

- **Engagement.** As aforementioned, increasing engagement **with** our followers is just as important as increasing our followers engagement with **us**. Doing so on Twitter is even more important than



on Facebook, as Twitter was created with the intent that users would be constantly retweeting, favoriting and commenting on other users' updates; Facebook feels like an aggregation service while Twitter feels like a live think-tank, so steady engagement with other users is vital to get the most out of the service.

What do we need to start doing on Twitter?

- **Video.** Visual content is on the rise, and video content in particular reigns supreme. Young social media users
- **Advertise.** After the success of the Facebook campaign, there is now a large gap between audience sizes of the two Midwest Jesuit social media accounts. Launching a campaign on Twitter would increase our reach and influence on the network and help us network with other profiles.
- **Communicate with relevant channels.** It's great to retweet or favorite a post from a channel like The Jesuit Post, America Magazine or any other relevant page to the Midwest Jesuits, but to really drive engagement we should be commenting on links, stories, photos, etc. from other pages on Twitter.

Other Social Networks

Google+

What are some of the benefits of this network?

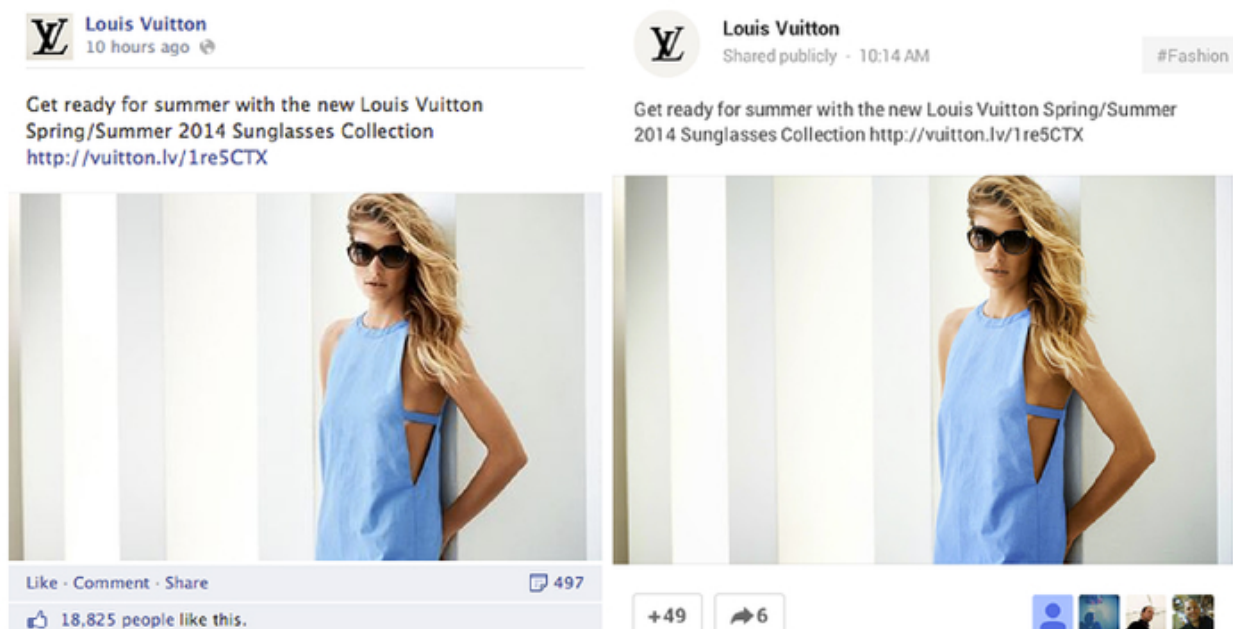
- **Improved SEO.** Google+ connects a user's actions across all Google products, which means that the activity of your company page on Google+ directly affects your website's ranking in Google search. Google+ content will show up more frequently for people logged into their Google account with your page in their circles.
- **Circles.** Google+ takes the "list" concept from Twitter and perfects it, allowing a user the ability to choose which other users it wishes to place in each circle based on its own criteria. For example, you can create multiple circles (customers, press, new customers, fans of X, fans of Y, etc.) and then send relevant information to each circle individually. This segmentation makes targeting a much simpler process compared to Facebook and Twitter (and nearly every other social network), and doesn't require ad spend to achieve results.
- **Google Hangouts.** The defining feature of Google+, Hangouts let up to 10 users simultaneously video chat with each other. The feature could be used to engage users in ways brand new to the Midwest Jesuits.
 - For example, we could host a monthly/bi-monthly Hangout with a couple prominent Jesuit figures (either regionally or nationally) and let them have a Q&A or simply a chat with the Midwest Jesuit community. Since Google+ does not allow for contests or promotions, the MW Jesuit fans involved in the Hangout would have to be selected via Facebook or Twitter.
- **High concentration of tech-savvy users.** These users are more likely to participate in Google Hangouts and respond to the use of the social network's unique feature sets (like circles).

What are some of the downsides of this network?

- **Limitations of SEO.** While Google+ is often lauded for its positive impact on SEO, for some reason content from Google+ shows up less frequently when someone has not added your page to his or her circles *or is not logged in*. That last italicized bit is huge, as it's pretty rare for users to constantly stay signed in. This is likely more of an issue for desktop browsing, as mobile apps usually keeps people logged in to their various profiles (though not always).
- **Circle limitations.** Google+ falls more in line with Facebook than Twitter when it comes to "tagging" users or businesses in a post. On Twitter, a business page can tag either other businesses or individual users, but on Google+ a business page can only tag another business, just like on Facebook.
- **Competition.** Google+ currently faces a steep uphill climb to reach the popularity of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. If the Midwest Jesuits decide to use Google+, reach and engagement on the service will be significantly lower than it is on Facebook and Twitter.
- **No contests or promotions.** As the current MW Jesuit social media plan stands, this isn't a huge deal as we don't run contests or promotions (yet). If we plan to run contests in the future, they won't be through Google+.

How would this network fit into the current scope of work?

- In terms of general day-to-day posting, Google+ would not add much to the current scope of work, as the platform behaves similarly to Facebook; each post would likely add an extra 15-30 minutes to the scope of work (1-2 additional hours of work per week). Here's an image of Louis Vuitton using both Facebook and Google+ (note the amount of likes and shares on each post; this image illustrates the difference in reach and engagement between the two platforms):





- However, if we plan to use Hangouts as outlined above, the scope of work will increase significantly; the feature would require the creation and maintenance of a separate schedule to plan the appearance of Jesuit figures in future Hangouts. (Estimated 2-3 hours of additional work per Hangout)

Should the Midwest Jesuits use this network?

- **Yes**, as long as the Midwest Jesuits decide to use Google Hangouts. Otherwise, there are too many similarities to Facebook and not enough unique benefits to justify its use.

Instagram

What are some of the benefits of this network?

- **Appeal to millennials.** This is the biggest reason for the Midwest Jesuits to join Instagram; next to Vine, it has the youngest user base of all social networks and the majority of them are highly engaged with the platform.
- **Created specifically for mobile.** People continue to leave their desktops behind in favor of their smartphones, which means mobile-centric platforms, like Instagram, will rise in popularity.
- **100% visual.** Like mobile use, visual content is on the rise. Photos and videos routinely see higher levels of engagement, so using a platform specializing in said content is worth trying. Posting the daily prayer on Instagram should see higher reach and engagement compared to Facebook (once the channel has attained a solid base of followers).

What are some of the downsides of this network?

- **Relatively small user base.** Instagram's 300 million monthly users are nothing to scoff at, but they pale in comparison to Facebook's 1.39 billion monthly users.
- **Requires custom content.** Unlike Facebook, Twitter and Google+, there is no way to aggregate news on Instagram; original photos and video are the only types of content possible. This means that the Midwest Jesuits will have to find someone to create custom visual content in addition to the daily prayer photos.
- **Limited advertising.** Instagram just rolled out advertising last year, and has so far limited the ability to advertise to a few select "big brands." There's no word yet on when "normal" accounts can start advertising.

How would this network fit into the current scope of work?

- Starting out, the current scope of work wouldn't increase much if the platform is used as another place to post the daily prayer messages; we estimate an additional 1-2 hours of work per week.
- Once an original content creator is in place, the scope of work will increase; for example, if 5 original posts are created each week, drafting, scheduling and posting would add an estimated 2-3 hours of work per week on top of the daily prayer posting.

Should the Midwest Jesuits use this network?



- **Yes.** Repurposing the daily prayer posts for Instagram is a good place to start until an original content creator is found.

Pinterest

What are some of the benefits of this network?

- **All images can be hyperlinked to the original source.** This helps drive traffic from Pinterest to external sites (such as jesuitprayer.org or jesuitsmidwest.org). Links are key to search engine optimization success, and Pinterest's referral traffic outranks Twitter.
- **Selective following.** Images uploaded to a Pinterest profile aren't contained in a single feed like on Twitter or Instagram; they're part of separate image boards, which makes it easier to appeal to a broad range of interests. Starting out, the Midwest Jesuits would only have one board (daily prayer posts); the addition of more boards in the future would require original content to be created.
- **Engagement isn't required.** Pinterest survives and thrives off of the simple acts of following boards and repining (reposting) images. Comments are not required, but they can help with a page's voice and presence.

What are some of the downsides of this network?

- **Specific audience.** Google estimates that Pinterest users are around 80% female, and around 75% or users are under the age of 45. For an expanded reach, Pinterest must be used in tandem with other social networks.
- **Quality images required.** Like Instagram, Pinterest requires a custom content creator to justify using the service.
- **Less conversational.** While it's nice that hardly any engagement is necessary to succeed on Pinterest, such a system makes it more difficult to have meaningful conversations with the community.

How would this network fit into the current scope of work?

- Of all the additional social networks, Pinterest would fit the easiest into the current scope of work. Updating the page each day with a new daily prayer post would add an estimated hour of work each week.

Should the Midwest Jesuits use this network?

- **Not yet.** Instagram and Pinterest would serve near-identical functions if both were used (posting of daily prayer), and Instagram's young user base prioritizes it over Pinterest. Depending on the success of Instagram, it might be worth testing the usefulness of Pinterest hyperlinks by creating a Pinterest album for the daily prayer pictures in the future; if a substantial increase in traffic to jesuitprayer.org from Pinterest is discovered, the Midwest Jesuits can expand use of the platform.

Vine

What are some of the benefits of this network?

- **Ease of use.** Vine's popularity is due in part to its simplicity; the tutorial takes 30 seconds and videos are created at the touch of a button.
- **Video length.** The average adult's attention span is [down to eight seconds](#), and Vine users can only make [six-second videos](#) (all Vine videos loop endlessly, similar to a [GIF](#)). This time limit forces brands to tell stories in a creative and concise manner, (hopefully) raising the quality of content in turn.
- **Fresh, organic, laid-back platform.** While advertisers have infiltrated most social networks, Vine isn't monetized (yet). Consumers generally look to Vine for more relaxed, offhand content with a positive feel.
- **Millennial haven.** Vine attracts Millennials more than any other social network. The platform hasn't released official demographic information (or any real information for that matter), but [surveys](#) show that large portions of users are in their teens or early twenties.

What are some of the downsides of this network?

- **Video length.** While the six-second video length can lead to more creative content, it isn't much time to lay out a cohesive, well-thought-out message. Traditional video and marketing techniques often do not apply to Vine due to the content's brevity.
- **No links.** Like Instagram, Vine doesn't support clickable links in content, which means that Vine content cannot drive users to external sites like jesuitprayer.org. Even within a user's profile, clickable links are not supported.
- **Lack of metrics.** Vine recently added the "Vine Loops" metric, which lets you know how many times a video has looped (number of plays). Unfortunately, this is the only true metric the platform provides and it is largely useless, due to the fact that Vine videos repeat automatically; if someone logs into their feed and leaves it unattended, the views multiply quickly because there's nobody to scroll past a video to make it stop looping.
- **Vine influencers.** There's no advertising on Vine, which means boosting content relies on partnering with influencers on Vine. This doesn't bode well for smaller organizations/brands trying to recruit influencers.
- **Requires custom content.** This is the biggest roadblock to adding Vine to the Midwest Jesuits' mix of social networks. If the MW Jesuits added Instagram or Pinterest (the two networks with the most similarities to Vine), a content creator wouldn't be immediately necessary due to the daily prayer posts. As these posts are images and Vine is a video platform, brand new, original video content would have to be created.
 - One potential workaround in the beginning would be to shoot Vine videos that pan slowly across the daily prayer image.



How would this network fit into the current scope of work?

- Of all the considered networks, Vine would add the most to the current scope of work. The proposed “pan shots” of the daily prayer posts would take an estimated 15-30 minutes each, resulting in 1-2 hours of additional work per week. On top of that, we would need to create an original content plan (various meetings and brainstorming sessions). Once a plan is in place, each video could take anywhere from 30 minutes to a few hours to create and distribute.

Should the Midwest Jesuits use this network?

- **Not yet.** There’s simply too much “unknown” surrounding Vine; the platform just turned two in January, and does not offer any concrete background information. If someone is lined up to create content, Vine becomes a viable option.

Conclusion

Vox recommends that the Midwest Jesuits continue using Facebook and Twitter in order to retain the following benefits:

- **Regular posting schedule.** Demonstrates importance of the channels to the Midwest Jesuits.
- **Daily prayer messages.** They result in the highest number of likes, comments and reach.
- **Consistent voice.** The current voice is professional and extremely consistent.

Vox recommends that the Midwest Jesuits **join** the following social networks:

- **Google+.** This network will help SEO and provide a new way for the Midwest Jesuits to engage followers via Hangouts.
- **Instagram.** The goal of attracting youth is high on the Midwest Jesuits’ social media to-do list, and Instagram is where the demographic appears most. In addition, the platform’s focus on visual content is a perfect match for the daily prayer photos.

Vox recommends that the Midwest Jesuits **do not join** the following social networks:

- **Vine.** While it is a strong up-and-comer in the social media world, Vine is simply too underdeveloped at this time. Once the platform adds a way to track metrics and the Midwest Jesuits have a custom content creator in place, Vine can be considered for use.
- **Pinterest.** Instagram is a better choice due to its substantially larger and younger user base.

Budget

- Vox estimates that the management of Google+ and Instagram will add **\$700** to the Midwest Jesuits’ monthly retainer. We look forward to discussing this with you to ensure the budget is appropriate.