



# MARKETING TRENDS

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Tools and platforms worth exploring



■ by Jen However

While certain marketing principles never change, the methods and tools that work best shift as technology and customers evolve. Here's a look at some of the marketing trends that are finding success for businesses and may serve your ministry well. ►



## Vertical Video

There was a time in recent history that a vertical video online seemed to reveal a user who did not understand how to use his or her phone. It annoyed people like me — a lot! But now, vertical video is widely accepted and preferred, since most people are watching videos on their phones, which they primarily hold vertically.

While YouTube is still the king of user-generated video content, social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook have been working to make video a more significant part of the user's experience. Instagram launched IGTV, allowing users to create a channel that features original (vertical) video content.

According to the article "How Vertical Video is Changing Content Marketing" on [www.cmswire.com](http://www.cmswire.com), vertical video provides more engagement than horizontal videos. The article quotes Steve Weiss, CEO and co-founder at the ad agency MuteSix, who says, "Vertical videos are excellent for adding a layer of immersiveness to your video marketing as opposed to overt intrusiveness. Consumers like an edgy, intimate feel in video as it helps capture the human experience." Weiss continues, "This makes vertical video fantastic for showcasing day-in-the-life clips or behind the scenes shots. It lets your audience feel like they're the ones behind the lens, offering them an authentic customer experience."

Consider taking advantage of the opportunities you have to show what goes on at your camp or conference center through a vertical lens, inviting viewers into the story.



Photo courtesy of Christina Rogers at Sunset Lake Camp

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#### **Voice Search**

With the rise of personal assistants like Amazon Echo and Google Home, people are becoming more prone to ask questions to get answers from a search engine, as opposed to typing in their search criteria. Even on mobile devices, people are using their voices to search more often than in the past. According to the article “Why Do Businesses Need to Optimize For Voice Search” at [www.entrepreneur.com](http://www.entrepreneur.com), even back in 2016, one-fifth of all Google queries were voice searches. This means your website needs to be SEO-optimized for voice as well. What does that look like? Take a look at the last several texts you sent and read them out loud. If you were to attempt to communicate those same messages in an actual conversation with your friend or spouse or supervisor, would you say things the same way as you typed them?

Consider the ways people might be talking about your camp or conference center or the programs you offer and make sure your website includes key phrases, not just keywords.

The article continues, “When Google’s John Mueller talked about optimizing for voice search in a Webmaster Central Hangout, he concluded with the following advice: ‘... Focus more on trying to make it so that Google and other search engines can understand the context of information a lot better and to make sure that your content is written in a way that can be read aloud. Which I think is a general guidance anyway.’ ”

#### **Chatbots and Artificial Intelligence**

A chatbot, according to Acquire.io, is “simply a program that automates certain tasks by chatting with a user through chatting interface.” Chances are, you’ve encountered a chatbot on a website or Facebook. Companies are using chatbots for customer service, as well as marketing, providing opportunities for customers to close a sale or even upselling additional items to a customer in the purchasing process on a website.

Chatbots that are well designed can often feel like an interaction with an actual customer service representative. Even the simplest chatbots can answer common questions visitors to your website or Facebook page may have. This is because of the advances in artificial intelligence (AI). In the article “10 Marketing Trends to Watch in 2019” at [www.entrepreneur.com](http://www.entrepreneur.com), the author says that AI “makes data analysis more efficient, can target potential leads rapidly and can perform tasks that humans struggle with.”

The challenge with chatbots is that programming knowledge is required to build a chatbot. That means this is a project you’d need to assign to your web programmer or outsource to a company that can help create what you need. But, ultimately, you’d have a tool that can serve your customers and potentially increase your sales.

## Customer Engagement

Have you empowered your customers to become ambassadors for marketing your ministry yet? You know parents of your campers are using social media, so why not give them tools to spread the word about the experience their kids are having at your camp?

Much in the same way that CCCA offers graphics from The Power of Camp campaign for you to use on your social media platforms, consider creating your own graphics that you can share with parents and guests that help tell the story of your ministry. Platforms like [www.Canva.com](http://www.Canva.com) allow you to create social media graphics that you can customize with your own photos, logo and brand identity. Below is an example I made using Canva to give you an idea, and it took me less than 10 minutes to create.



## Stories

If you're not using Stories on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, you're missing out on a simple way to offer new content for your audience and garner their engagement.

Marketing company Single Grain offers this advice for using stories on social media, "Since stories disappear after a set period of time, this is a great opportunity for marketers to make good use of FOMO (fear of missing out). You can feature your employees in the Stories, show the story behind the making of a product, ask for reviews about your products and services. ..."



Consider stories that highlight activities at your camp, or that promote some of the add-on options you offer for campers and guests. Empower your staff to capture vertical videos or photos to use in your stories. Take advantage of the elements that you can add to your story, like text, sound, emojis and polls or questions (that help generate more engagement on a story).

You can create stories directly in the social media app, or use Canva (or similar apps) to create a story graphic. I created the example above using Canva and added the Yes/No poll in Instagram.



There's no doubt that technology is continually changing, so you have to stay on top of the new trends and tools available to you. But no matter what you're using for marketing, remember that the story you tell is your most powerful tool. Find the platform or tool that will serve you best, and tell your story well. ■



Jen Howver was once a camp kid who later spent two summers working at a camp in Michigan, where she met and later married her husband, Jay. Fast forward more than 20 years and now Jen works as a marketing consultant and editor of InSite magazine. She and Jay live in Monument, Colorado, with their daughters, Noelle and Chloe, and way too many pets.