



# CYO Digital Strategy

A Supplement to the CYO Strategic Plan  
Covering a Digital Strategy for the Future of CYO

Created by Peter Piscitello, Executive Director

April 2013

## Objective

The world in which CYO operates is an increasingly mobile and digital place. In order to best reach the members of our Catholic parishes and schools and serve our families in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, we must be committed to an innovative and focused approach toward using technology. In unison with the teaching and efforts of the Church today, the CYO Digital Strategy is designed to create a framework for future endeavors and a guide for integrating technology and digital application into the CYO mission.

## Goals

Catholic. Formation. Participation.

The overall goal of the CYO Digital Strategy is to provide support to our core mission as outlined in CYO Bylaws and in the motto of Catholic, Formation, Participation. The following should be specific goals of this document:

1. Create a framework that informs decisions related to the development and administration of CYO activities in the digital arena, consistent with the teachings and mission of the Catholic Church.
2. Create a framework that informs and improves efforts to serve and retain current CYO families and attract new families to participate in CYO activities.
3. Create a framework that facilitates development of the CYO "brand" and differentiates CYO from other organizations while increasing awareness of our brand and mission in the geographic region of the Archdiocese.
4. Create a foundation for future growth in CYO and position CYO to be a leader in innovating, developing and using technology in youth sports.
5. Create a plan for the development and maintenance of a CYO presence across all platforms that serves the needs of our target demographic. This should include a website, social media, mobile applications, and any other emerging platform.
6. Introduce a plan for the purchase, use and maintenance of technology within CYO that allows for maximum effectiveness of employees while also mitigating costs across CYO.
7. Create a timeline for implementation of key digital initiatives and strategies.

## Why a Digital Strategy?

This document intends to outline the infrastructure necessary to meet the above goals and indicate an action plan for achieving these goals. As the digital world is a critical component in the lives of CYO families, it is important that we strive to serve through these mediums and assure we consistently provide a product that is both accessible and effective.

In addition, the Catholic Church has indicated the importance of embracing the digital world as a way to reach the faithful around the world and also evangelize. In his annual World Communications Day messages, Pope (Emeritus) Benedict XVI has called new digital technologies a "gift to humanity" while encouraging the faithful to use them in an authentically Christian way. From the Vatican to our local Archdiocese, the Church has further supported these comments by establishing new methods of communicating and emphasizing the benefits of utilizing digital communications.

It is important that CYO position itself as a leader in this area both within the Church and in youth sports. Much room for advancement remains in these areas. The creation of this digital strategy will serve to promote innovation and advancement in digital arena while creating the framework necessary to meet the goals and mission of our CYO.

## Format

This document is organized by major categories related to digital strategy. It includes sections titled CYO Brand, Web, Social Media, Mobile, Emerging Technologies and an Equipment Plan. Within each category is outlined the important strategies that relate to these areas as well as initiatives and action items. The appendix includes a listing of resources for digital initiatives within the Church.

## Adoption

The CYO Digital Strategy was drafted by the Executive Director, using input from CYO families, parishes and Archdiocesan constituents. The strategy was presented to the CYO Executive Board for review and was initially adopted after being revised and updated on May 13, 2013.

## The CYO Brand

The Catholic Youth Organization must strive to increase brand awareness across all digital platforms, including a consistent message and visual identity. Doing so serves to enhance loyalty among current participating families and also increase attractiveness to potential participants. All branding should answer the following questions:

- What story/message are we trying to convey to the target audience?
- How does this message connect to the target audience? Why do they care?
- How will this message incite action among the target audience?

The CYO Brand should be focused on the following core components:

### Logo

The logo used for CYO should remain consistent and feature prominently across digital platforms and non-digital spaces (i.e. uniforms, facilities, etc). This logo should demonstrate clearly the organization's identity and signal it's function or mission. Colors, fonts and designs should remain consistent in all mediums.

### Mission

All branding should clearly disseminate the mission of CYO, namely to provide an authentically Catholic environment in which children can grow virtue, develop their full human potential and become a more committed disciple of Christ through the medium of sports.

### Environment

The CYO should at all times communicate and promote an environment in all spaces that is authentically Catholic and consistent with the values and expectations outlined in CYO bylaws. This should include a reference to the Play Like a Champion approach adopted in partnership with the PLC Program at the University of Notre Dame.

### Differentiation

In conjunction with the core components listed above, consideration should be made for how the organization differentiates itself from competitors in other youth sports programs through branding efforts. With a large number of options available to local families, differentiation - particularly through communicating mission and environment - is a key component in making the organization attractive to families looking for youth sports opportunities.

## Implementation

Several initiatives shall seek to promote the CYO brand as described above. In terms of digital initiatives, the first priority should be to create established spaces across the three major platforms described within this digital strategy: web, social media and mobile (see sections).

Within each of these platforms, one of the following logo variations shall be prominently displayed:



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Both logos clearly represent the organization using the classic CYO acronym by which the Catholic Youth Organization is more commonly identified. In addition, the logo features a crucifix which prominently signals our Catholic identity, as well as the words Catholic, Participation and Formation. These words encapsulate the organizational mission in a simple way that can be easily remembered and identified. Figure 2 above also includes small icons for each sports program offered by CYO. Consideration should always be given to implementing strategies that closely align information about CYO programs to digital spaces that feature the logo. As Figure 1 does not feature a reference to sports programs, it should be accompanied by information and visuals to that end wherever possible. The logo to the right may be used where this connection cannot be easily made.

Expectations for the environment families should expect in both physical and digital domains should be conveyed through the CYO brand. Perhaps the most effective way to accomplish this is to closely align CYO with the Play Like a Champion brand throughout platforms. Given the partnership that shapes a significant portion of CYO's formation activity, CYO should seek to create digital branding that identifies closely with this brand and enhances loyalty to that program and approach among CYO families. This can be implemented by key placement of the "Play Like a Champion" verbiage within platforms that strategically places the two organizations in the same context.

Finally, the aspects of CYO that differentiate the organization from competitors in the youth sports space should be highlighted throughout digital platforms. A focus on the Catholic

mission, relationship with parishes and schools, and the formation of coaches should be emphasized. In addition, any aspects of individual sports that the organization considers strengths should be highlighted as well.

## Web

The CYO website serves as the "front door" to the organization and should be considered among its most important spaces. As the website is the primary source of information for CYO families, it also has the potential to be the most integrated with marketing, development and functional efforts. The website should first and foremost reflect the organization's brand on all pages. In addition, it should serve the following key functions for visitors:

- Provide easy access to key information for all CYO programs
- Market the organization to potential participants
- Provide formation and resources for CYO coaches
- Provide an entry point to Catholic formation and link families to additional resources as well as Archdiocesan parishes and ministries.
- Facilitate easy participant registration and back-end administration process for parishes and Athletic Directors
- Invite feedback from current CYO families

The website should also integrate seamlessly with the mobile platform considered later in this Digital Strategy, so that all functions referred to above can be accessed from all locations.

## Implementation

The layout of the website should be formatted to best serve the functions above. In addition, it is important to design and maintain the website in such a way that it is a "living" website - one that is updated regularly and communicates information relevant to individuals at the time they are looking. The CYO website has traditionally suffered from appearing stagnant and with having infrequent updates. By assuring that content and appearance are refreshed each day or as appropriate, the website will appeal to visitors and encourage more frequent visits to pages.

Given the importance of a website's appearance, it is important to outline parameters for the layout of the site; with content changing regularly and dependent upon specific timing, a more general approach will be taken here to the way the website looks. A clean, modern look should be maintained with CYO logo and programming prominently displayed on main page and throughout. The main page should also provide quick information on upcoming events or programs, while inviting visitor to further explore additional website pages. These elements may be best served by a main page that utilizes media (video or pictures) as a focal point, with

a header furthering the brand element and images/boxes that show upcoming dates and key links within the site. Within this main page, a clean and concise navigational menu should be apparent and accessible in such a way that it remains consistent across all pages of the website. An example layout is Figure 3.

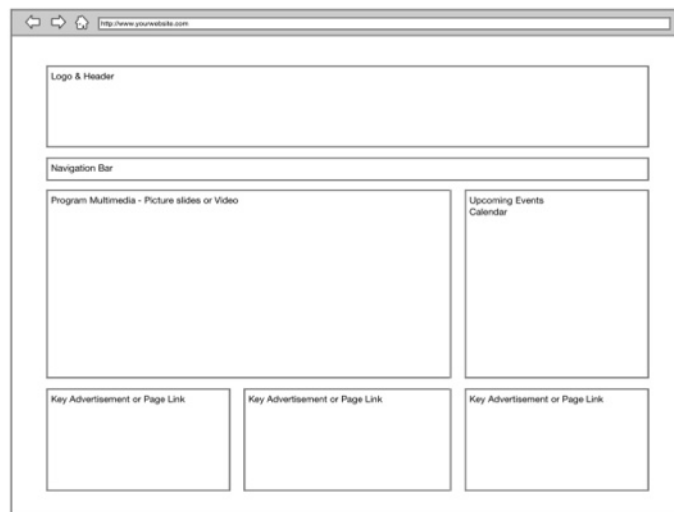


Figure 3.

In Figure 3 above, the layout demonstrates that the largest portion of the website's main page is dedicated to media appropriate to CYO programming. While this may begin as basic photo slides, efforts should be made to upgrade this to video or a more interactive medium, consistent with advancing technologies and strategies employed by leading websites. While the layout or design of the page may change over time, the core elements described above should remain the same.



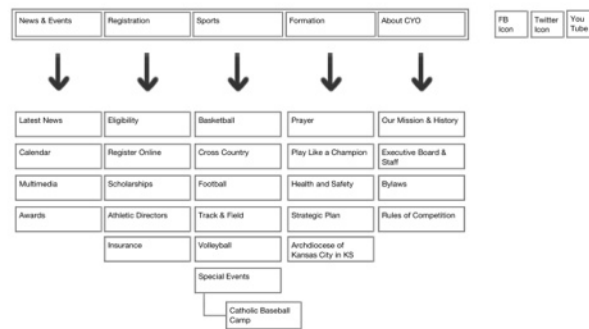


Figure 4.

While not aesthetically a centerpiece of the website's design, the navigation bar is one of the key elements of the entire website. It should remain consistent in placement and appearance on each page of the website. It should be clean, linear and easy to navigate to pages based on drop-down "header" categories. CYO should be careful not to include too many headers or links within each category so as to make it as easy as possible for visitors to find and navigate to information on the website. A possible configuration is available in Figure 4.

Overall, efforts should be made to make the main page of the website as concise as possible with few words and focused multimedia presentation. This should cater to the phenomenon of visitors viewing pages and content in very short segments. In addition, all colors, fonts and formatting on the website should be consistent with the CYO brand and message as described in this document.

The remainder of pages on the website shall imitate the design of the main page, with layout designated appropriate to content. Each page specific to a sport or program shall clearly provide all information necessary for parents and coaches of participants, including schedules, rules and resources. These pages should integrate seamlessly with any scheduling software used by CYO, implementing a "mirror" effect on the page so that visitors are not aware they are exiting the CYO website to visit scheduling page. This provides consistency in the experience of visitors. All pages shall focus on multimedia content as a vehicle for information delivery when possible, including video, photography and audio when appropriate.

All pages should also provide an infrastructure that supports the current or future integration of technology to automate or house resources for parents, coaches and Athletic Directors online. For example, every effort should be made to house online registration on the site in such a way that Athletic Directors can easily access the database and have information from registrations

automatically populate their teams, saving them time and energy. For coaches, provisions should be made to add resources such as video of drills, instruction and education on each sport. To this end, the website should strive to provide educational resources as much as possible for CYO coaches.

Moreover, the website should provide for visitors a vehicle for providing feedback, particularly on CYO programming and officiating. The intent should be to accomplish this in two ways: via email feedback forms for open ended comments, as well as a form-oriented survey on officiating to be submitted by coaches following games. In both cases, a page should be created that provides a form where the appropriate visitor may enter feedback and complete surveys, then submit these forms electronically via the click of a button. On the back-end, a system should exist that processes and configures submissions in such a way to maximize efficiency of reviewing and creating reports.

Finally, it is important to consider the time commitment that must be dedicated to the CYO Website in order to properly maintain, update and promote both the infrastructure and content components. Given the importance of the platform and in conjunction with the other platforms discussed in this Digital Strategy, it may be beneficial to consider additional personnel dedicated to digital implementation on both the website and social media. At minimum, a part-time position could be created and dedicated to these tasks daily. This may maximize the value and potential of these platforms for CYO.

## Social Media

The use of social media is a critical element to success in today's evolving digital environment. Used correctly, these tools have the ability to attract a global audience to content or multimedia almost instantly and across all digital platforms. With social mediums constantly changing and emerging, it's important to have a strategy that allows for flexibility while setting core expectations and standards for use.

In the Church the use of social media has been widely encouraged as a means to the laity's call to evangelization. In his 2013 Message for the 47th World Communications Day titled *"Social Networks: portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelization"* Pope Benedict XVI noted this and elaborated on the importance of properly using these platforms. In addition to noting their ability to foster dialogue that can "reinforce the bonds of unity" and "promote the harmony of the human family," the Pope also noted the ability of social media to provide a witness to the love of Christ and a contemporary factor in human development. He noted that these forms of communication serve to confirm "the importance and relevance of religion in...the life of society."

It's important also to realize that this goes beyond social media that references the faith specifically, as a community of believers can demonstrate a witness to Christ in the simple way they communicate "choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel" (Pope Benedict XVI's Message for the 2011 World Communications Day). As it pertains to CYO, all popular social media platforms should be utilized in order to accomplish the following:

- Effectively communicate information to parents, coaches and parish administration regarding CYO news, programs or events.
- Market CYO programming to both current and potential families in order to grow the organization's total number of participants in each program and thus further evangelize within the pastoral regions served by CYO.
- Create a forum for public interaction and feedback outside the boundaries of physical CYO facilities.
- Provide a forum for research and development surrounding possible program changes or additions.
- Build a digital CYO community that mirrors and enhances our community of parishes and schools, while promoting a positive environment consistent with the expectations of participants in all CYO activities.

- Provide an environment in which members of the CYO community can seek continuing formation in the faith.
- Enhance CYO brand awareness in the local and regional communities.
- Create platform for efficient distribution of information in emergency situation.
- Drive traffic to CYO Website.

It is important to note that all social media activity and content should be directed toward adults and not for the children participating in CYO programs. Directing such use toward children represents a conflict with the safe environment standards promoted by CYO.

All goals above represent in some way a mode of communicating and integrating with the CYO community in a more frequent and viral way. This approach has several key benefits, namely the promotion of growth and retention of participants, as well as furthering the involvement of parents or volunteers in such a way that benefits the mission of CYO and the formation of participants.

## Implementation

The relative popularity of the CYO program and its Christ centered mission will naturally attract many current families to interact with social media initiatives with basic marketing of platform availability. However, it is critical for retention that once families are attracted to interacting with CYO through a given medium that the organization be both creative with interaction and non-intrusive. Communication should be regular enough to keep the audience's attention but not so frequent as to drive a person away. It's important to remember that members of the audience can leave the digital "relationship" just as quickly as they associate or follow the organization through a medium. What constitutes appropriate interaction will differ based on the particular medium in question, these will be reviewed below.

First, it is critical that CYO have specific standards in regards to social media usage that are consistent with the organization's mission. These standards should inform decisions on which social media platforms to use, how to use them, and the boundaries that need to be in place when interacting with the audience. For CYO, this certainly should be formed by the organization's mission as an authentically Catholic entity, rooted in Christ and beholden to the teachings of the Catholic Church. As such, CYO should be careful not to use platforms which promote negative, vulgar or inappropriate interactions, nor any platform that directly antagonizes the Church or seeks to combat her teachings. When using any platform, the following "rules" should be observed:

1. All interactions by both the audience and CYO should be positive and respect the dignity of each human person.
2. All content should be consistent with Catholic teaching and Christian moral behavior.
3. Any information which is confidential or violates the privacy of any individual is strictly prohibited.
4. All federal and state laws, including copyright laws, shall be observed.

CYO should create a social media policy (see Appendix III) to be posted on its website and attached to social platforms that outlines the above rules and outlines the ramifications of violating them. Any interaction by a member of the forum that violates these rules should be quickly omitted from a public forum and the person may lose the privilege of being associated or involved with CYO, including any programs or facilities. The online community is an extension of the physical CYO community and should be treated as such.

In order to effectively implement the use of social media platforms in CYO, it may be beneficial to look at the implementation of the most popular platforms individually, then use these as a guide for considering the use of any emerging or future platform.

### Facebook

While Facebook began as a network intended for college students, it has expanded into one of the most frequented and diverse social media platforms in the world. As such, it provides a platform where CYO can expect to find many local families already engaged and interacting. This makes it good focus for CYO in terms of resources and integration. It costs nothing to be a presence on Facebook, but can provide a great deal of return on time investment by engaging families in a digital CYO environment where they can discuss, comment and interact with CYO and the Executive Director. One proven way to add "friends" or get people to "like" the CYO page is through a contest or incentive program. CYO should begin a push of heavy Facebook integration by offering a reward for those who follow CYO on this platform (perhaps free CYO participation for a year), then market this program in order to gain a large audience. Once audience is captive, continue to actively engage families through regular interaction. An effort to provide a small quote, scripture passage or thought each day suffices, with more targeted interaction on a weekly basis and full-scale marketing efforts reserved for special/infrequent events. Overall, a balance should be struck between keeping audience engaged but not overloading with content.

### Twitter

Twitter quickly emerged in the past few years as a tremendously popular platform and an efficient way to disseminate content or information in a concise way to a large audience. Using

only 140 characters limits the content but keeps each post to a length easily digested by each viewer. Much like Facebook, incentive based campaigns have been proven as effective ways to gain followers. Once active on Twitter, it is important to make tweets "stand-out" so they are not lost in a person's timeline. Again, regular interaction is important but must remain balanced. In addition, interaction between Facebook and Twitter should be integrated as many in audience will be tied to both and redundancy should be avoided. One simple way to do this is to tie the accounts together so that the organization posts on one platform but the post can be seen by "followers" on both. CYO should then maximize the strengths of the two services. For Twitter, this will include more concise messages intended for wide distribution or limited, concise feedback (informal surveys can be effective through this means). Facebook, meanwhile is a place for more involved engagement and discussion among a large group.

## YouTube

A March 2013 survey indicates that YouTube is the most popular social media platform among teenagers 13-18 (IPSOS MediaCT and Wikia), making this perhaps the one platform where CYO should strive to provide content that may attract the interest of its true customer: the participants in CYO. While the organization must be careful not to target social interaction with minors, there's no question that by posting attractive videos demonstrating CYO "in-action" more children and families may be drawn to participation. Further, continued use and evolution on this platform will lead to continuity with the future generation of families and children. Perhaps due to its popularity among children, adults are also very much becoming more involved on YouTube, streaming videos from a variety of the website's channels. However, the Catholic Church has not demonstrated a high level of investment or competency in this medium, providing an opportunity to draw the interest of families in a unique way within the church. CYO should strive to create and utilize a YouTube channel to show videos produced in-house highlighting CYO programs and initiatives, including videos for coaches and parents on practice drills, education, and catechesis. Videos should be kept relatively short so as not to exceed the quick attention span of users. In addition, any footage used that features children participating in CYO activities must be carefully vetted and include a media waiver indicating that the parents are aware of and approve of images being used in this way. If used appropriately, this is something that families find exciting and can greatly enhance the CYO experience for all parties involved.

## One-Way Social Communication: Blogging and Email

These two mediums for communication can certainly be considered social, but are primarily based off a sort of "one-way" communication. The use of both platforms should be fairly simple: to further diversify the dissemination of information in an effective and entertaining way. With email the most utilized computer element used by adults, email marketing in the form of so called "email blasts" sent to a list (audience) of subscribers can be a very effective way to distribute information for special events. In addition, a quarterly newsletter should be created

that highlights CYO programs, initiatives and news to further keep people up to date and engaged.

Regular blogging can also provide a forum for conveying thoughts and receiving feedback through a comments section. This particular medium can be best used for thoughts that may not fit into a targeted need or may be consumed more leisurely by those interested, but not all of an audience. The Executive Director should create and maintain a blog that helps connect his thoughts and ideas for the organization with families. This can also serve to supplement announcements of new programs/initiatives by way of a platform for more detailed explanation of the planning and intent behind a decision.

### Adapting to Future Social Media Platforms

With the rate that new social media platforms are created and spread in today's world, a general strategy should be carefully considered in terms of approaching technologies that emerge in the future. First, the organization should work to determine whether it believes a given platform/medium is sustainable or simply a "fad." With limited resources, it may be a waste of time to develop and utilize a platform that never catches on or attains a useful audience. Further, it's important to consider whether the platform is 1) relevant to the CYO mission and marketing efforts or 2) appropriate to the CYO mission. The first consideration can be deceptively difficult - does a given platform actually enhance the CYO experience or engage the targeted audience, or does it detract from current efforts. As an example, Instagram has become an exceedingly popular way of sharing photos worldwide, but does it truly enhance the mission of CYO in the same way something like Twitter allows the organization to communicate with an audience? As for the second consideration, the simple fact is that not all platforms will be appropriate for use in a Catholic Church forum, nor will all audiences be engaged and positive. If a platform is being actively used to target the church or primarily to engage in behavior that is not in concert with Church teaching, it should be avoided. A relevant example might be the emerging use of the Reddit platform. In itself this service is not bad, but the proliferation of users targeting the Catholic Church or making obscene comments might make it unsuitable for CYO use. CYO should carefully consider these elements with any emerging platform and should allow existing social media usage and experience to inform decisions on adapting new technology.

### Personnel

As referenced in the website section, it may be beneficial to consider the addition of a staff position dedicated to forwarding social media within CYO. While the duties of this position could also be added to those of a current staff member with additional hours, an individual dedicated to website maintenance, social media, and technological innovation within the CYO office could help maximize the reach of these platforms and the value added to CYO.

## Mobile

The mobile platform has emerged as perhaps the most convenient and fastest growing platform for access to communication. Via smartphones and an ever-growing collection of tablet computers, individuals can access virtually anything they would do on a computer from anywhere in the world. Thus, it's important that CYO has a strategy for addressing this platform and utilizing it for communication and interaction. From the user's perspective, anything found on the website or social media platforms discussed in this document should be accessible from a mobile device.

Within a mobile strategy, there are three key areas to consider for an organization such as CYO: text services, mobile internet, and mobile applications. The majority of time and resources should likely be directed toward the latter two areas, with texting a viable communication platform but perhaps best used by an organization for infrequent or emergency updates (see below). However, mobile internet access and the use of dedicated applications ("apps") make up a growing amount of the overall access point for the internet and social media, meaning they are also increasingly the most likely way a person will interact with CYO. According to a 2010 study done by telecommunications equipment vendor Ericsson, approximately half of all internet access was being done from a mobile device of some kind, with over 45% of users having also downloaded and used a social media application and 35% reporting that they check these social media outlets before they even get out of bed in the morning (statistics via Inc. website and Carolyn Brown, May 26, 2011). A look at a recent week of activity on the CYO website demonstrates a similar trend, with nearly 25% of page views during a week in mid-April coming exclusively from mobile platforms ([appliedi.net](http://appliedi.net) website statistics for CYO Website, April 14-20, 2013). While this reflects a total percentage lower than the national study cited above, it nevertheless indicates a similarly growing trend toward mobile devices, a trend also supported by conversations with families participating in CYO.

One of the difficulties in strategy and programming for mobile is the diversity in platforms being used. Smartphone and tablet devices must be considered both separately and in how they interact together. Further, it's important to consider the major operating systems in place, as formatting and application will differ across these operating platforms. For both phones and tablets, there are two major players. According to January 2013 research by Comscore, the Android (Google) and iOS (Apple) operating systems made up 90.1% of smartphone users nationwide and 96.5% of tablet users. The two graphs in Figure 5 below demonstrate the split for the platforms on both smartphones and tablets.



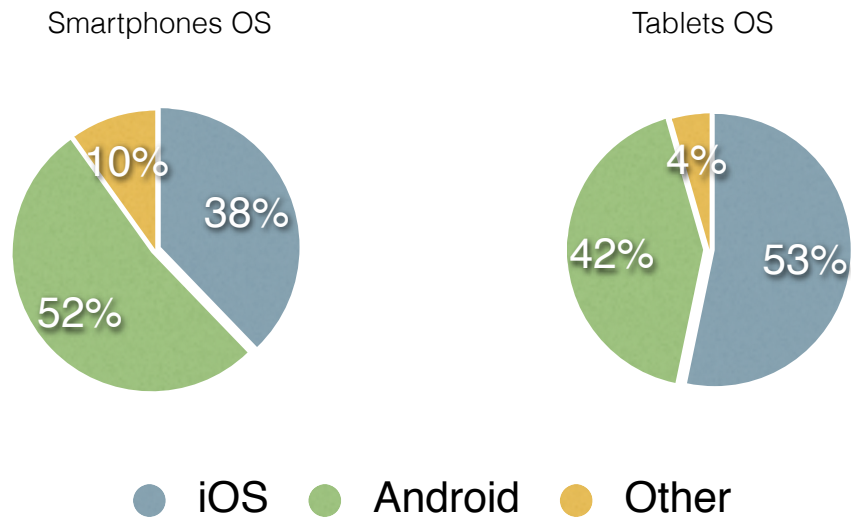


Figure 5.

It should also be noted that the "other" category is largely comprised of the Windows NT system created by Microsoft and experiencing some growth in 2012 as a result of their Windows Phone and Surface tablet running that system; this represents a possible growing platform moving forward. However, given the two distinct categories of mobile web and application usage, a second set of data is helpful to create strategy moving forward. In terms of apps, there appears to be small overall differentiation, with both Apple and Google claiming over 800,000 mobile applications on their respective platforms at the end of 2012. Yet there does appear to be a dramatic difference in online activity, as seen in Figure 6 below, courtesy NetMarketShare's monthly usage statistics for March 2013.

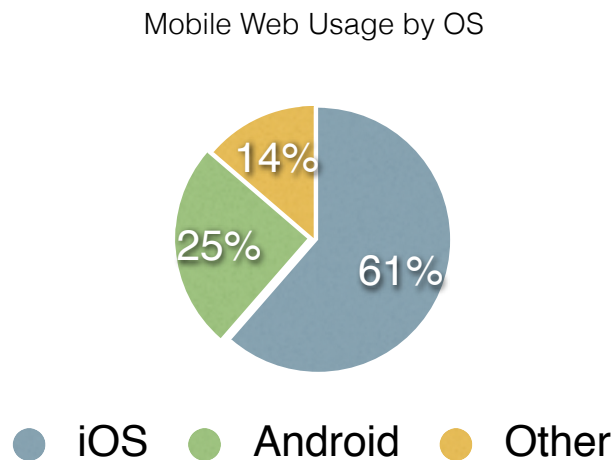


Figure 6.

Though some other research shows different data suggesting the two platforms are far more equal, the data from NetMarketShare would seem to include internet access from iPads, which would logically increase the iOS share of this usage.

What does this all mean for the digital strategy of CYO? Currently, CYO has no mobile application nor dedicated mobile website formatting for its current online presence. As the above data suggests, this represents a failure to provide a large portion of our audience with access to CYO on the platforms they are most likely to use. This can lead to frustration among users who are used to using not only applications, but websites setup for easy mobile access. With technology and usage trends indicating the continued (dramatic) growth of the mobile platform, it is critical that CYO dedicate resources to both the development and maintenance of both the mobile website and application platforms.

## Implementation

In terms of implementation, let us return to the three main categories and view each one separately: text services, mobile internet and mobile applications.

For text services, CYO should consider gathering all mobile phone numbers into a database and utilizing a text service for infrequent or emergency usage. Services exist for a nominal fee that can send a mass text message to an entire database with one simple action from a central computer or mobile device. A good example of this may be to alert registered families when inclement weather dictates the cancellation or postponement of CYO activities. The ability to send a text to all families, coaches and administration may serve as an effective supplement to the current weather hotline. The same method could be used in an emergency situation. For any text service, it is important to offer the option for users to opt-in and opt-out of the service, so as not to inconvenience or cause a cost to those not wishing to receive this service.

In terms of mobile internet use, the CYO website must be formatted for use on both smartphone and tablet devices. The most efficient way of doing this is to utilize web programming that simply formats the existing website to the device on which it is accessed by the user. Efforts should be made to utilize programming that does this automatically, so as to allow the user to seamlessly access CYO content without having to take extra steps. The mobile formatting should follow all branding and content guidelines discussed within the organization's digital strategy, with provisions made for a format that is more simple and clean in appearance for ease of use on a variety of (smaller) devices. While it is possible to automate this across platforms and devices, it's important to note that this should look differently than the website accessed from a stationary computer/internet. Still, it is important that any mobile formatting also allow for the same emphasis on multimedia as the regular website and provide easy access to key information such as schedules, results, news and events.

While it should be noted that a dedicated CYO application for use on mobile platforms is not a necessity, the trend toward mobile usage and the benefits of this approach would seem to indicate it is a solid strategy to pursue this avenue. The first consideration should be that any mobile application will have to be created separately for the different platforms. While website formatting is segmented more by device size and need not be specific to operating system, Android (Google), iOS (Apple) and Windows NT (Microsoft) devices will all require different apps that are distributed through their different app stores online. These applications can be largely tailored to appear and function the same on all devices. Like the mobile web platform, all applications should be clean and simple in appearance, with either a drop-down or "button" menu on pages. These applications should provide easy access to the most vital information, such as schedule, results and rules. In addition, the application should provide access to multimedia also available on the full website, although it can be presented in the simplified and appropriate format for tablets and phones. Finally, it is also useful to link the full website through the mobile application, so that anyone who needs information not available in the application can easily access the full website.

Both the text and mobile website platforms should be lightly marketed so that awareness of these resources is present in the CYO community. The mobile application should be part of a broader marketing campaign along with social media initiatives designed to increase both awareness and usage of the platform. The mobile application should be made available as a free download on all operating systems, with links to the download available on the full CYO website.

## Emerging Technologies

While the platforms discussed previously in this document cover the most relevant technologies available at this time, the constant progress in today's world dictates that new technologies will become available routinely. Much as the proliferation of a digital society would have been hard to fathom for businesses only 30 years ago, it stands to reason that we cannot know with certainty what the future holds and what technology may become available in the years ahead. As such, it's important to understand how to assess these technologies under the unchanging principles of CYO and how to utilize the resources that do become available.

As stated previously, the use of any technology or platform should always be dictated by its relation to the mission of CYO. Namely, does that technology assist and add value to the mission of leading young people toward Christ through the vehicle of youth sports. Moreover, it is important to understand that unlike other businesses, CYO should address all technologies from a moral perspective. Despite its ability to add value to the day-to-day functions of CYO, a particular resource should not be utilized if it provides an inherent moral danger to CYO families or has a global perception as being in opposition to the Catholic Church. If these criteria can be met positively, if an emerging technology can add value to the mission of CYO and does not detract from a life of holiness, then it can be seen as fit for use within the organization.

While it can be difficult to know what technologies will exist even 10 years from now, one can predict with reasonable certainty the general direction of technology in both the near and long terms. It is important that CYO always remain progressive in its approach to researching, understanding and adopting emerging technologies, so as always to remain on the forefront of technological innovation and its service to families. In this way, CYO has the ability to remain at a competitive advantage over other youth sports organizations. History has demonstrated that businesses and organizations that practice a forward-thinking approach to technology and are early adopters (when appropriate) gain an advantage in the public's perception of the organization and in growth of both consumers and revenue streams. On this last point, while CYO is a not-for-profit organization and should be approached as such, it stands that additional revenue streams can enhance the organization's ability to serve its families and that the "monetization" of technologies should be explored as appropriate to the mission of CYO.

Finally, it may be useful to explore briefly the emerging technologies we are likely to see in the near term so as to gain an understanding of where near-term resources should be focused. As mentioned in relation to social and mobile areas of this document, there is currently a significant trend toward mobility in technology. A simple look at production trends reveals a massive shift toward the tablet model of computing, where the consumer is moving toward the use of portable devices usually less than 11" in size to complete all personal and many work tasks. In addition to dictating a focus on mobile accessibility in CYO, this societal trend should

also be viewed in how it informs behavior in general. With constant access to mobile technology, consumers are demanding information more quickly and efficiently than before. It follows then that CYO should explore the opportunity to serve this trend by providing information and results in a more timely manner. This brings to light another emerging technology in broad scale wireless or cellular networking that could allow CYO to more efficiently report scores/results in near real-time for families from each facility. This could actually serve to make the work of event administration more efficient while providing family who aren't present an opportunity to follow the event online. Other potentially useful emerging technologies include advances in voice and video communication, data storage and sharing, and health/wellness endeavors including injury prevention and management.

## Equipment Plan

Effectively managing the application of digital initiatives also requires a plan for managing the financial impact of technology costs. While these costs seem to be increasing daily, a solid plan for equipment purchase, maintenance and renewal can mitigate the impact of necessary expenses and provide a plan that allows for greater flexibility and maximizes resources moving forward. What follows is a plan for managing known expenses and planning for unknown items that may be useful to the organization.

In terms of "core" equipment, the computer, smartphone and tablet remain the most useful and effective technologies for the day-to-day administration of CYO. For computers, the current trend in technology is such that computers become dated within three years of purchase and obsolete in around seven years, depending on make and model. Beginning in 2013, CYO should budget for the purchase of a new computer for each employee every 5 years. With the current two employees, this cycle should begin in 2013 with the next purchase in 2015. Computers should then be replaced when they reach five years old, with previous computer formatted and either recycled or provided for charitable use. In replacing computers, CYO should reference principles within this document and strive to utilize high-end technology within a reasonable cost (currently < \$3,000). Better computer technology will allow for better output and integration designed to serve families involved in CYO.

Smartphones currently have a somewhat shorter life span due to the dramatic advances in cellular networks and technology. Most phones are replaced in the market with a newer model each year, with technology on current phones designed to be outdated within 2 years and obsolete within 3-4 years. While it can be difficult to find the balance in using this technology, its core usage for calls, emails, texts and mobile internet remain fairly basic and should allow for replacement no less than every 3 years at a reasonable cost (currently < \$200). This would indicate the next replacement take place in 2016. Care should be taken to assure that a smartphone provide good communication and serve the mission of CYO in a mobile capacity.

The third core piece of equipment for daily administration is the tablet device. These products are in their relative infancy with technology developed largely after 2008. Most tend to mirror smartphones in their development and lifespan, though many models have shown an ability to outlive smartphones while functioning quite well. In addition, this product differs in its core usage in that it should effectively allow the user to accomplish remotely most tasks that are done on the work computer in-office, including remote access to that computer. This device should also be equipped with cellular technology to allow for "online" usage while accomplishing tasks remotely from any area school or facility. With current technologies in this area, CYO should replace this device for all applicable employees every 3-4 years, depending on need.

One other technology that should be included in this core plan is the scheduling software used for all CYO sports. Currently, this function is being completed ably by Demosphere. It is important that whichever service is used in future years allow for the following tasks to be completed efficiently: the creation of schedules for all CYO leagues in one system, ease of changes and modifications to the schedule, remote access to all scheduling functions and easy public access to schedules for CYO families. The use of a system should be budgeted each year.

In addition to the core equipment expenses above, CYO should be proactive and diligent in planning for additional expenses as equipment or software becomes appropriate for a digital initiative. Each year, a reasonable amount of budget shall be determined by the Executive Director and Board to be set aside for equipment and software, including the core equipment above and other potential (minor) expenses. In addition, the Board should work with the Director on a special basis when emerging technologies or digital initiatives require additional purchases, with these expenses coming from savings, reallocation of budget expenses, or (preferably) a new revenue stream created by the technology or initiative. This last model should be used by CYO whenever possible, so that the addition of any initiative not only covers the cost of implementation but also supplements other budget needs. All expenses should fit within the mission of CYO and the principles listed in this document, adding value to the operations of CYO and serving the needs of the organization's families while leading kids to Christ.

## Summary

Each of the sections in this document outlines a different area of digital growth that is applicable to CYO and the families involved. Utilized correctly, they represent a way to effectively communicate, serve and improve operations for the entire CYO community. From the development of the CYO brand to its presence across both existing and emerging platforms, all digital initiatives should strive to support and forward the mission of CYO in leading children and families to Christ through youth sports participation. By taking a progressive approach to technologies and opportunities within the digital arena, CYO can support this mission in the world today in the most effective and complete way.

While there is no doubt the constant changing of society and technology will render specific strategies and equipment obsolete moving forward, this strategy should serve as a guideline to inform decisions and provide a clear path for CYO in the midst of an often cluttered world. Using the strategies for general use and implementation outlined herein, as well as the resources listed within the Appendices, CYO can be a leader in digital innovation and integration, providing the best possible program for our participants and families.



## Appendix I: Timeline for Implementation of Major Strategies

Many of the strategies or implementations in this document should be rolled out in an appropriate timeframe to maximize the value they provide to the CYO community. Strategies should largely be considered on an individual basis and timing may fluctuate at the discretion of the Director and Board. The timeline below provides general projection in three categories: immediate, short-term, and long-term. This list is not meant to be comprehensive.

### Immediate (During 2013)

- Twitter - Implementation, Marketing and Active Use
- Facebook - Implementation, Marketing and Active Use
- CYO Branding (ongoing) - Logo Use and Cultivation of CYO Brand
- Mobile Website - Formatting Current Website for Use Across Mobile Platforms
- Blogging - Active Participation on CYO Website

### Short-Term (2-5 Years)

- YouTube - Implementation, Marketing and Active Use with New Videos
- CYO Branding (ongoing) - Maximizing CYO Brand on Website and Extending Scope
- Mobile Application ("App") - Creation of dedicated CYO App available on major platforms
- Text Service - Creation of Text Message Service for Weather or Emergency Information
- Personnel - Consider Addition of Dedicated Personnel for Digital Initiatives
- Email Newsletter - Create Newsletter for Quarterly Distribution to Participating Families
- Registration Process - Upgrade Registration Process for Efficiency by User and Admin
- Video Library - Create Library of Coach Resources Within CYO Website

### Long-Term (5+ years)

- Refresh Website - Upgrade Website to Remain Consistent with Technologies and Use
- Emerging Technologies - Consider and Consistently Adapt to Technologies that Emerge

## Appendix II: Additional Resources

Vatican Documents (available at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va))

- World Communications Day Messages of Pope Benedict XVI
  - 43rd World Communications Day - *New Technologies, New Relationships, Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship* (2009).
  - 45th World Communications Day - *Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age* (2011).
  - 47th World Communications Day - *Social Networks: portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelization* (2013).
- *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications* (2009).
- *Message of the Holy Father John Paul II for the 24th World Communications Day* (1990).

### Books

- *The Church and New Media: Blogging Converts, Online Activists and Bishops Who Tweet*. By Brandon Vogt (2011).
- *Prayer in the Digital Age*. By Matt Swaim (2011).

### Internet Resources

- The Church and New Media Website - [www.churchandnewmedia.com](http://www.churchandnewmedia.com)
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
  - General Media Page - [www.usccb.org/media/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/media/index.cfm)
  - Social Media Guidelines - [www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm)
- National Catholic Register
  - Catholic New Media Library - [www.ncregister.com/blog/matthew-warner/catholic\\_new\\_media\\_library](http://www.ncregister.com/blog/matthew-warner/catholic_new_media_library)

## Appendix III: Social Media Guidelines

The Catholic Youth Organization of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties (CYO) is committed to the successful integration of social media into the CYO community. As such, the following guidelines should be used at all times when interacting with social media or communications within the CYO community. This includes those communicating on behalf of the organization and all those involved with CYO social media in any way.

- Users should at all times remember that the **CYO is a Catholic organization** and all communications should be consistent with a respect for the Church and a manner consistent with Christian moral teaching.
- **The dignity of all persons shall be observed at all times.** All comments should be consistent with Christian charity and respect for all other persons, both those directly involved in the communication and those not involved.
- Remember that you are **accountable for everything you say and do online**. Each person is responsible for any content published on a social media platform, personal blog, or any other form.
- **Consider the consequences** before you engage in any comments or communication. This also includes legal consequences that may exist. In addition to being blocked or removed from CYO social media for any comments, pictures or posts that are not appropriate, the content may have significant ramifications at your work, parish or your community.
- **You represent CYO - and Catholics everywhere - whether in an official capacity or not.** Any public communication in a CYO sanctioned arena can be viewed as a representation of our CYO, parishes and faith community. Please represent these entities and yourself appropriately.
- Support the mission of CYO and **lead our children and families toward Christ**. All social communication should be consistent with the goal of leading others to Christ.
- **Build a positive community.** Social media is a great avenue to interact with others and promote positive, faith-filled relationships. Have fun and help create a community that is a joy to be a part of.

## Appendix IV: Key Questions for Digital Implementation in CYO

The following is an outline of core principles to consider in implementing any digital strategy within CYO. These principles are synthesized from throughout the CYO Digital Strategy and included here in the form of questions to consider before moving forward with any digital initiative.

- Does the initiative fit the mission of CYO? Does it assist or add value to the mission of leading children and their families closer to Christ through youth sports participation?
- Is the initiative or technology to be utilized consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church? Does it inherently lead people away from God or is it perceived to be in conflict with the Church in any way?
- Does the initiative benefit the majority of participants in CYO? Is it accessible to all families in the pastoral regions served by CYO?
- Does the initiative improve the operations and efficiency of CYO programs? Does the initiative provide more work for volunteers or does it provide a more efficient way to accomplish tasks?
- Is the expense of the initiative consistent with the trust placed in CYO by those providing revenue to the organization? Does the expense fulfill a true opportunity to forward the mission of CYO and impact families?
- Is the technology to be used sustainable or simply a fad? Will a product have a reasonable lifespan or become obsolete quickly?
- Will the initiative help improve the CYO experience for participants and families?