

Using Technology to Mobilize Prayer

Below are ideas from teams scattered around the world who are using various technology solutions to mobilize prayer. If you'd like to hear more about a specific solution or connect with the team who is using that solution, contact your Area Prayer Strategist to make the connection.

Mailchimp

www.mailchimp.com

Mailchimp is one of the most commonly used mailing list applications used by workers. The service is free unless you have an exceptionally large mailing list, is very flexible, and offers additional benefits for an extra fee. Mailchimp also allows you to operate separate mailing lists in case you want to have one for your general updates, one for more specific ministry updates, or a separate list for more committed, trusted intercessors who may want more in-depth requests.

WhatsApp Broadcast Groups

Though WhatsApp is not as popular in the US as in other nations, the Broadcast Group function is a simple and quick way to send text, photo, or audio messages to everyone in a group. This can be used to convey prayer requests to smaller groups, and allows for easier, more regular, and potentially quicker connection between workers and intercessors. For this function to work, all the people in your target group must download the app, and you must have their phone numbers saved in your phone. The Broadcast Groups allow you to send messages to the group, but individuals who reply will only reply to you, not the entire group.

Textedly

www.textedly.com

Textedly is a US-based texting service that allows you to send text messages to large groups of people, and allows for the pre-scheduling of text messages so that you can write and schedule messages to go out at pre-determined times. The service is not free, but is considered well-worth the cost by those teams that use it. Read on to hear from two of our teams that use this service:

What tech solutions do you use to mobilize prayer?

We use a texting service, Textedly (textedly.com - have to be on a US VPN to access the site), to send weekly texts to our "subscribers." They text our keyword to Textedly's SMS short code to sign up. (We also have a website, www._____.net. We

launched that about a year after we launched the prayer initiative because we wanted to have a place to define what the vision is if we couldn't be in front of people telling them. The vision is for this to be more than our team, so it became a must for it to grow beyond us. We've also made a couple videos, one casting vision for our nation, one for prayer leading to movements.)

How has it worked out so far?

Personally, we think it's perfect. Emails get lost, buried, spammed, etc. For some reason, people look at texts. We love that people can sign up in an instant, on the spot (whether it's someone we're talking to at a park in America, or speaking at a large church - just throw the number and keyword on the screen, and voila, 100 new subscribers). I also love that it limits our characters. We get charged 1 text per subscriber for a 160 character text. We can also upgrade it to 2 and get more characters, as well as send a picture for 3 texts. With a picture you get something like 1600 characters. We've used pictures for big events - whether local holidays or Christmas type stuff. I love the limitations because if I get a weekly, or even every other week, email (or whatever medium) with 3 long paragraphs, I'm likely not going to read it all, and I might say a quick prayer right there. We have our "personal" email list where we send the paragraphs, so we're not saying that should never happen. But the vision is for this to be very focused on initiating movements in our nation, not on us or our team, and so we want to keep it short and sweet so people can jump right in. I see the texts as much as anything as a constant reminder that people have committed to pray for our nation every day... if they forget, they get reminded every week! It's also a great tool for training people to pray movement language, and the limitation of characters really helps us hone in there. We try every week to include a Scripture reference, so that those who want to really dig in and pray more than just a sentence (we say 5 seconds, 5 minutes, or 5 hours...it all makes a difference!) have more to guide them.

(Input about textedly from another team): Our team has been using textedly.com for our texting platform where we send messages 5 days a week. Each day has a different theme or topic to focus on and we send a short 1-2 sentence prayer with a scripture reference to help jump start those who receive the messages to pray with us. So far it seems to be working to help people know how to pray specifically for us, our nation and the region. We asked for feedback several months ago now and had a few people respond giving input of ways we could improve and help people engage even more. A couple things people suggested were to have a day to send followup/praises for the points we asked them to pray for previously and to change the structure of the message to be more like a crafted prayer rather than just saying "Please pray for..." We realized asking people to receive a text every day of the week was a little overwhelming, so we scaled back to just sending messages Monday-Fridays.

Have you encountered any obstacles with this service, and if so, how did you overcome them?

- The biggest obstacle is that our service only allows US numbers, and we've had a decent amount of interest from people outside of the US. We solved this by creating a broadcast list on WhatsApp for people outside the US.

- We also had issues with some people not being able to sign up due to Short Codes being blocked (this seemed to be mostly T-Mobile). This can be solved by people contacting their provider and say they want Short Code blocking to be removed from their account. While we did have people successfully do that, this one's kind of a bummer...someone might be envisioned in the moment, but if they're not able to act quick, they might not care to take the time later to get it sorted out.
- Some people, mostly those born before 1970 😊, find it difficult to text the keyword to the short code. This was solved by getting our account approved to add subscribers manually (they give us their number and we add them on the website). This took a bit of work - having an email address that matched the name of our account and calling to answer some questions. When we told them what we used it for, the guy actually thanked us for the work we were doing. Kinda cool!

Do you have any other suggestions or input on the use of tech for mobilizing prayer?

We feel called to mobilize prayer for our nation that goes beyond our team's contacts. This service seems to enable us to do that. It's never an email "from us." The website helped answer questions for people that we aren't directly connected to. I know I've said it already...but less is more. It can drive us crazy that people (read: Americans) are too busy and distracted to pray for the nations, but us being driven crazy doesn't change the fact that they (read: we) are and will continue to be. So if we can capture them briefly, get them to pray consistently, even if it's not for an hour, then it's a win and it makes a difference for the long haul. And...for those hour long prayer folks, providing a passage of Scripture can keep 'em going for days!

Nations Prayer App

<http://nationsprayer.org>

If you're sent with AMI, you should already be a part of the Nations Prayer App, which gathers requests from different teams in the organization each week and shares those requests to app users, email subscribers, and on the NP website. This is a simple, built-in way for AMI teams to have their requests seen by hundreds of intercessors - so take good advantage of it, write clear and motivating requests, and send them to your Area Prayer Strategist on time!

Instagram

Workers in low-security contexts may be able to use Instagram as a simple, visual way to convey prayer needs. Consider writing out prayers for different needs, so that as people see the requests, they can simply pray along with what you have written - sometimes providing a prompt for prayer under a photo can be helpful. Don't flood your followers with photos \ requests, but rather set up a sustainable rhythm that will allow you to maintain a flow of requests for the long haul. (This could also be done via Facebook or Twitter).

Outside Prayer Mobilization Platforms

There are already many existing platforms for mobilizing prayer for different nations and people groups. Do some research to see what, if anything, already exists for your target nation or people group, and try to determine how your work could benefit from these existing platforms (websites, Facebook groups, etc.). For instance, www.prayingforindonesia.com is operated by people in the US, but gathers requests from different workers and ministries all over Indonesia, in order to convey those prayer needs to a broader audience (this website has over 1000 people committed to pray for these needs). Through doing research into existing prayer mobilization for your target people or nation, you may become acquainted with others working among your target people, churches already engaged in prayer or other work among your people, etc.