

Pinterest Mini-Class

Click PRESENT

CLICK Co-founders Ben Silbermann, Evan Sharpe, and Paul Sciarra began developing Pinterest in December 2009. In March of 2010, the Pinterest prototype was made available to a small group, and by summer 2011, they were already ready to move the operation to a larger site. Pinterest has been hailed as the fastest site to reach ten million unique visitors ever. By 2013, Pinterest boasted 70 million users and now has over 100 million users.

CLICK Pinterest exists as a personalized social media platform used mainly as a “visual discovery tool”. The way it operates is simple: you can create and share collections called pinboards, generally centered on a specific theme, by way of visual bookmarks, called pins. Each pin functions like a hyperlink, with a picture instead of text. Pinterest is known for being a great place to collect ideas and resources for projects, events, and future plans.

CLICK But what makes such a simple idea so successful? Well it’s centered around the user’s ability to collect and share interesting, inspiring, and important images with others— a sort of virtual vision board— with the added bonus of a curated news feed. Since Pinterest is a place for the things we love, our love of the gospel should fit right in.

CLICK So let’s explore how to use Pinterest as a missionary tool in the most simple, effective, and inspiring ways. Our goal in member missionary work is to share what we love, and to invite others to come and see. Our focus today will be on how to become more approachable, visible, and likeable when it comes to sharing your faith on Pinterest.

CLICK Like Instagram, Pinterest focuses on displaying images of things that interest you rather than writing about things that interest you. One thing you can write on Pinterest, however, is your bio. Add a Mormon-centric detail about your life, your family or your faith like “I’m a Mormon” or add a link to your favorite Mormon website. You may not realize it, but the Spirit will help the right people notice these kinds of little details. A simple step of faith like this may be all it takes to get someone thinking more about their faith. Your Pinterest account can be a light to others, and your bio can help them see where that light in your life comes from.

Another way that Pinterest inadvertently helps missionary work is in showcasing people’s interests. Misinformation in the media, and lack of experience with members of the church leads many people to form misconceptions about who we are and what we believe. By maintaining a profile that compiles all of your interests, both non-religious and religious, you’re helping others see that Mormons aren’t all that different from everyone else. As people find common interests through your boards, you build connections that can help dispel rumors & heal prejudices, and even start conversations that build connections of faith.

CLICK If you pin an image with a quote from general conference, those who see, agree with, or are inspired by it may click to find the source, and find mormon or lds.org. This is a very non-intrusive approach to missionary work. Followers can easily, privately be led to positive,

inspiring sources of LDS content, and choose how long and in what ways they explore the content they find. It is often from finding mormon.org that non-members connect with the full-time missionaries via chat, where they are able to ask questions and begin to be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ. If someone wanted to learn more about the church, would they be able to find good sources through your Pinterest account?

You can start a board devoted to pins with basics about the gospel, quotes from church leaders, or other church-related resources, or you can incorporate these kinds of pins, as appropriate, throughout your other Pinterest boards. You may wish to appeal more broadly to a non-LDS audience by pinning LDS content under a generally titled board or pin. And since your pins show up on your followers' feeds, it's a good idea not to pin too many church-related pins all at once. Remember to prayerfully and purposefully share your faith, and to keep the people you love in mind as you follow the Spirit in sharing the gospel.

Pinning videos from YouTube is another great way to share your faith. Mormon Messages available through the Mormon channel make great spiritual pins. Videos from Mormons Made Simple, Al Fox and the "And I'm a Mormon" campaign can also make great missionary-minded pins. You can use hashtags such as #lds #bookofmormon #ldsconf and #familiesareforever to help people find your content when they search for gospel related pins. Because of the stylistic nature of Pinterest, non-LDS users frequently pin LDS content because it's uplifting, beautifully illustrated, and applicable to them. The followers you have already trust your taste, otherwise they wouldn't be following you, so sharing your testimony in small ways can make a big difference.

In "A Word for the Hesitant Missionary", Elder Uchtdorf states, "Conversion comes not through our words but through the heavenly ministrations of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes all it takes is one single phrase of our testimony or about an experience to set in motion the softening of a heart or the opening of a door that can lead others to experience sublime truths through the promptings of the Spirit." One pin may be all it takes to start the conversion process.

CLICK To go one step further, you can really help in the conversion process by making personal connections. People trust recommendations from friends and family. Creating a likeable, interesting, and consistent presence on Pinterest is one of the best ways to create trust and dialogue with your followers. Although private messaging is not currently available on Pinterest, you can create conversation through comments, by recommending boards or pins to your followers, or by sending a pin privately. You can also link your Pinterest account to your other social media profiles, and build connections with your followers on multiple platforms. Above all else, follow the Spirit. Pay attention to what's going on in the lives of those you follow, and share the gospel in the way that the Spirit directs.

Pinterest allows you to share the gospel effectively because the receiving end is in control of the time they spend and the content they choose to click on. It's a great place for non-members to anonymously explore and be exposed to Mormonism, and has given us a non-pushy, non-preachy, unintimidating way to share what the Church really has to offer, and what we love about it.

CLICK Bonnie Oscarson's Pinterest account displays the description, "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." And includes everything from Words to Live By to Holiday Ideas to Mormon Ads. Although she was active on Pinterest before she was sustained as Young Women's General President, Sister Oscarson's following more than doubled subsequent to her call. In an interview for a blog post entitled "Would your Pinterest page pass the Bonnie Oscarson test?" she said, "Now, here's your homework: Wander around your social media sites and imagine you've just been called as the president of one of the church auxiliaries...Do you find yourself wanting to erase a few things? Who will people decide you are if all they know is what is on your social media page, and that short little bio that gets released?"

CLICK As "pinners" you should mentally put yourselves through the "Bonnie Oscarson Test." To your followers, you may be the sole or primary representative of what Mormons like, hope for, and believe in. So make the topic of your faith more visible on Pinterest, and use your Pinterest account to prayerfully share the gospel. As you do so, you and your followers will see, as Russell M. Nelson taught, that unlike a lot of the other wonderful things you find on Pinterest, "This wave of truth... is not man-made! It comes from the Lord, who said "I will hasten my work in its time."

CLICK for Q&A

CLICK for During Activity