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5 Implications

OF THE "SET IT & FORGET IT" TREND FOR YOUR CHURCH

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There's no need to remember to buy shaving supplies because you can have them delivered to your door every month. Tired of figuring out what to eat? Let a meal delivery service send you fresh ingredients so all you have to do is cook up a storm. Your dog needs the same food every month... use autoship and have Fido's food automatically sent to you. Even Amazon has gotten in on the "set it & forget it" trend by allowing users to subscribe to literally hundreds of products that are sent without them having to think about it.

In the last few years, there has been a growing trend toward turning consumer products into membership services. Rather than buying the product once, you join a small community that receives the product on a regular basis. Companies grow their customer base by signing up people who want to receive items consistently. Consumers benefit from having consistent deliveries. This is a clear and steady trend in the broader culture. What impact will it have on the churches we lead?

● **Perceived Busyness //** All of these services trade on the fact that people feel too busy. Two-income households are stretched between the demands of running a household and holding down jobs. People have a sense that culture is speeding up and leaving them with less time to get more done. This perception is at the core of many of these services. Whether or not people are busier now than 10 years ago is irrelevant because they believe they are and that drives their behavior. Addressing this "busyness factor" is essential when you craft programs, communicate important information or attempt to get people plugged in. People think they are busy and so we need to meet them there and raise the value of connecting with our churches.

● **Technology Impact //** All of these services have technology driving their interactions. In fact, these services are really technology companies that happen to sell a physical product. Their websites are virtually flawless in execution and they embrace new channels and technologies as they come along. They acknowledge that their customers are online a lot, so they follow up with them through social media channels rather than just using these channels for marketing. Data-driven discipleship is going to be the norm in churches with increasing impact. Seeing your website, social media channels, podcasts and other online tools as core to your growth strategy is where the future is headed. Are the highest levels of your church considering how your technology interfaces with people?

● **A Core Story //** Often these start-ups take on massive incumbent businesses in their categories. Dollar Shave Club is an ideal example of this because they compete with huge industry titans in the shaving supply category. Great storytelling is woven through their marketing and communications, from their hilarious YouTube commercials to the witty monthly newsletter they mail with the blades. How are we telling our own story as a church? Are we inviting people to join something special by showing their parts in the story God is writing? People are drawn to a good story ... and they want to stick around to see what happens next.

● **Recurring > One Time** // Embedded in all these businesses is the desire to build a long-term financial relationship with customers. In fact, all of these services offer some version of "lower prices" to entice you into a longer-term relationship. When we think about building donors for our church, we need to have this mindset. Our interactions with them need to be about earning the right to continue to interact with them. Rather than looking for "quick hits" or short-term financial wins, we develop relationships that will last for years. How are you thanking, acknowledging and informing your donors in ways that build long-term relationships with them?

● **Cocooning //** Over 25 years ago, futurist Faith Popcorn coined the trend "cocooning." The trend is all about individuals socializing less and retreating into their homes more. "Set it & forget it" services allow people to stay in their homes and have fewer accidental connections with people around them. As informal social networks, churches are built on the back of people connecting with their neighbors and community. As people continue to retreat into their home offices, man caves and the like, they are less likely to connect with your church. We need to explore ways to connect with people at home and offer programming and community that draws people into our churches.

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