

Platform pirating

by [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

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It's hard to know what to do and what not to do on the Internet. These are new forms of communicating, so we're trying out different rules of engagement. Often our social behavior forms by what gets on people's nerves. So, I asked [Meredith Gould](#), [Mihee Kim-Kort](#), [Christian Piatt](#), [Bruce Reyes-Chow](#), and [Landon Whitsitt](#), who have been a part of social media for a long time, to tell me what perturbs them. The feedback mostly had to do with criticizing one's work, asking for favors, and pirating platforms. This is the third part of the series (check out these links for [part one](#) and [part two](#)).

Part Three: Platform Pirating

In the world of social media and publishing, we use the horrendous and dehumanizing term "platform" to describe the people who are our friends, followers, readers, commentors, and even our congregations (eee gads!). In its best form, social media is a place for interactive and mutual support. In its worst, it can be a place where people try to find the biggest platform to take over.

Don't be a platform pirate. Christian Piatt, who writes a [blog with tons of traffic](#), finds it annoying when people "use my blog comments section to write or promote their own blogs."

Don't be competitive. Most of us have a competitive streak, and most of us need to get a handle on it before we go online. [Meredith Gould](#) created [#chsocm](#), a [Twitter chat](#) forum so that church leaders can discuss church and social media (the hashtag is short for church social media, and it's easily remembered by pronouncing it "ch-sock-'em").

Meredith wrote, "In the world of #chsocm, I'm especially irked by those who behave as if ministry is a competitive sport. These are people who won't promote anything anyone else is doing/creating/providing." She adds, "Jesus did not say, 'By your

stingy rude competitiveness everyone will know that you are my disciples.’”

Practice Reciprocity. Most of the people on our virtual panel are networkers. I suppose there have always been creatures like us, but we haven’t had the same tools in the past. Aside from Landon, we are people who write, speak, and consult for a living and don’t get a regular full-time-with-benefits income from one particular source. Since we’re not getting money from one employer, we work in a strange ecosystem that relies mostly on good energy. And I don’t mean that in some whacky pseudo-spiritual sense. I don’t even mean it in a narcissistic “*I wanna be famous*” sense. It’s a small pond, and we all know it.

I kind of mean that we rely on good energy literally—at least as literally as “energy” can be understood. RTs and shares become people hearing about us. Because people hear about us, conference organizers can invite us to speak and not lose money. Speaking invitations mean that publishers can invest in our words. And that bartered energy magically becomes food on our table, or a higher number on our account balance so that we can transfer money to pay our mortgage and not end up with a negative account balance number.