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How to Create a Great Church Website

You'll learn the strategies, processes and tools to help you create a website that effectively reaches your community and communicates to your church.

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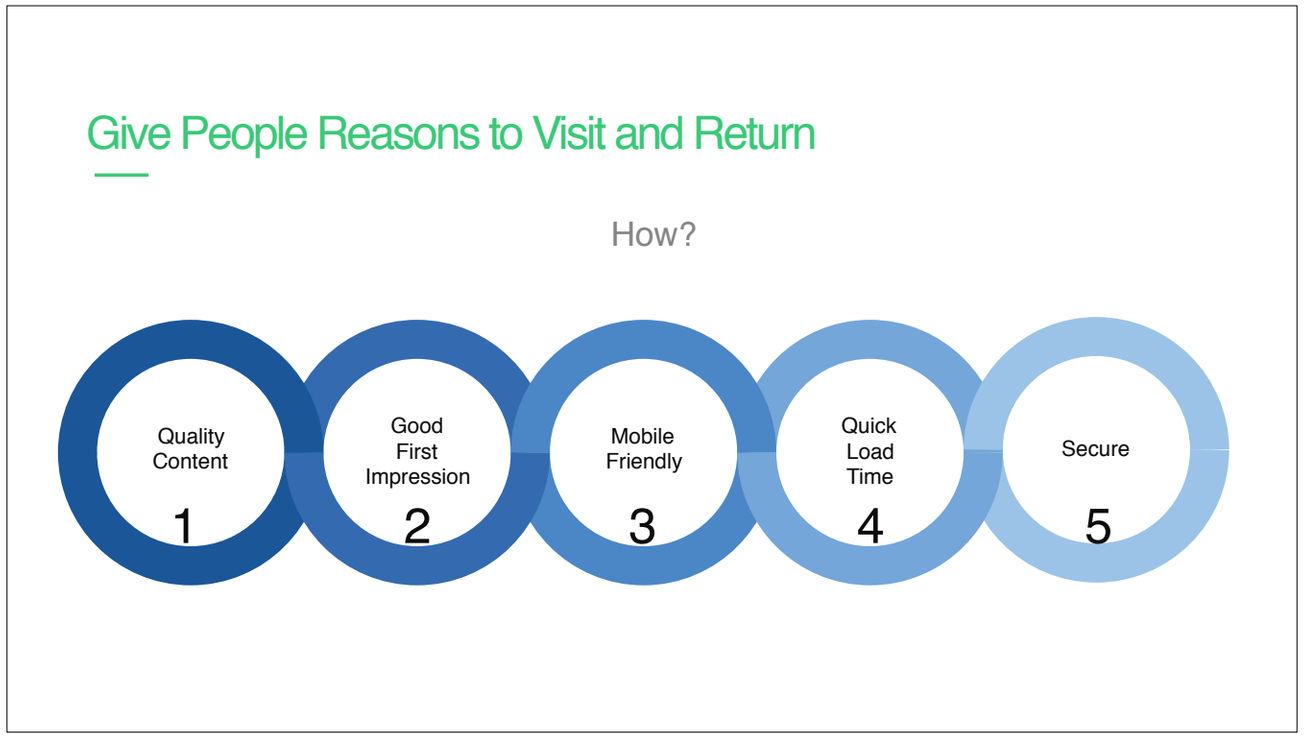


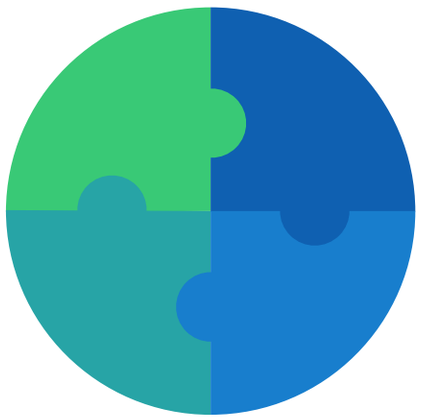
It’s a given that your church needs a website. But just having a website is not enough. You need to give people a reason to visit your site, and return regularly.

You do this through *quality content* on a website that makes a *good first impression*, is *mobile-friendly*, *loads quickly*, and is *secure*.

Let’s take a look at each of these five points in detail.

Focus #1

Create Quality Content



FOCUS POINT NUMBER 1 IS TO CREATE QUALITY CONTENT

Content is king. To create good, quality content, you need to put yourself in the shoes of people coming to your website. What questions are they asking? What are they looking for? Those are the things you need to provide. The people coming to your site will consist of both your current congregation and your neighbors that haven't been to church in 20 years. Some will be Christians and others won't. So, how do you reach them? How do you answer the questions they're asking?

Based on 20 years of conversations with churches, along with analytics data, we've put together a short list of content that people are looking for when they visit your site. This list obviously isn't exhaustive, but is a great place to start.

- Welcome/What To Expect
- Gospel/Beliefs/Mission/Core Values
- Pastoral Team
- Sermons

Welcome/What to Expect: These will often be separate pages, but they can also be combined. When someone decides to visit your church, they are probably already a little bit anxious. Your church website can take the edge off their anxiety by providing a few key pieces of information such as parking, style of dress, worship style, children's programming, order of service, etc. Great examples: http://bit.ly/2FJSIKv, http://bit.ly/2DrDasT, and http://bit.ly/2DvqMIw. *Helpful hint: Be yourself. You don't want to create an impression on your website that is different from what they will experience in person.*

Gospel/Beliefs/Mission/Core Values: We are lumping these together for purposes of this presentation, but some churches will break them down into their own pages. Truth matters, and people want to know what the church believes. They want to see a gospel presentation. They want to learn more about Jesus. And many want to know specific doctrinal points. We recommend that you get as detailed as you feel is necessary. Examples: http://bit.ly/2Dqkaek (multiple pages) and http://bit.ly/2FKXIOP.

Pastoral Team: This content is helpful, particularly for visitors. Visitors need to have familiar faces that they recognize when they visit. At a minimum, each pastor should have a headshot and short bio. If the pastor opts to do a family photo, we recommend that any minor children are left out of it. Same with the bio. Simply saying, "Pastor John loves spending time with his wife Emily, and their three children" will suffice.

Sermons: Put as much detail online as you can. Sermon audio should be available at a minimum, and sermon video and notes are a big plus. When it comes to notes, ideally, you'll want to include a downloadable PDF document for printing, and a transcript on the actual website. Also, make it easy for people to locate a specific sermon… sorting by book of the Bible, category, series, date, and speaker is an added bonus. Example: http://bit.ly/2FHwbOd. *Helpful hint: Submit your podcast to iTunes (https://apple.co/2pcJro1). But don't forget to have the raw RSS or XML feed available as well for podcast subscribers who don't use iTunes.*

Focus #1 Continued

Don’t Forget These…

1. **Location**
   address, directions, map

2. **Contact Information**
   phone number, contact form, social media

3. **Photo Galleries**
   give visitors a glimpse into the life of your church (mission trips, service trips, events, bible studies, people hanging out, etc)

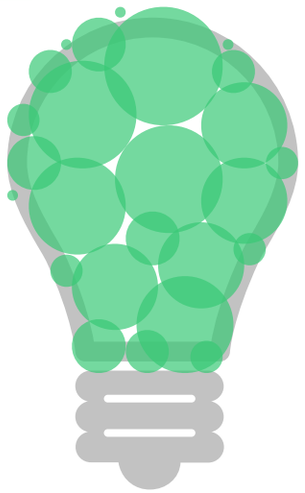
Surprisingly, the most basic items are often overlooked. Be sure to include:

- Location, location, location! (Address, directions, map)
- Contact information (phone, contact form)
- Photo galleries of events - galleries give visitors a glimpse of church activities, and shows that your church is full of real people.

It’s important that everything you put on your website is original to you. We have seen instances where churches will "borrow" exact verbiage from other churches. Not only is this dishonest, but it does you and your website visitors a disservice. It's OK to be inspired by how a church writes its core values, but it's another thing to copy and paste them directly onto your website (plus a bit ironic). So, take a little extra time, and write your own content. Be inspired, but don’t copy. ;)

Focus #2

Make Your First Impression Count



Design + Graphics + Text

- your website lays the groundwork for their in-person visit
- accuracy matters
- be yourself
- use pictures of your people (not stock photos)

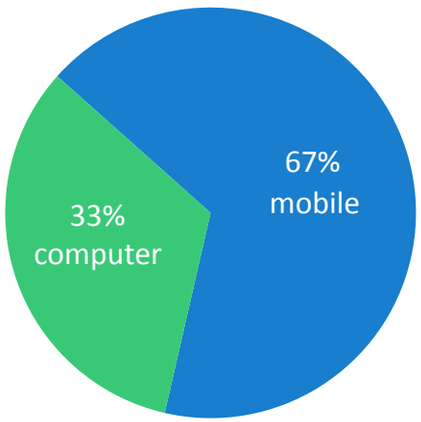
FOCUS POINT NUMBER 2 IS TO MAKE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION COUNT

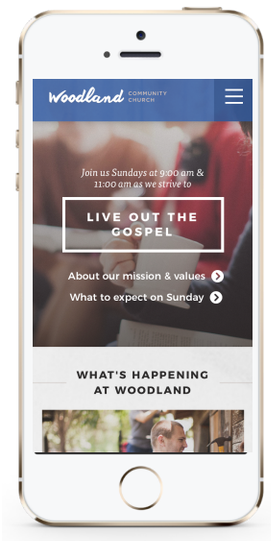
Choose a design, graphics and verbiage that accurately represents who your church is. Make sure the website experience you create is reinforced when they visit a service. If you're a church plant, great! Own it. If you're a large, 150 year old church, great! Own it. Be yourself (let the church be itself) and create a connection between your website and church service.

In regards to first impressions… there are many high-quality stock photo sites, but try to avoid putting up stock photos of people. If you can, put up pictures of real people involved and attending your church. This makes the site experience more authentic.

Focus #3

Be Nice to Phones and Tablets





FOCUS POINT NUMBER THREE IS TO BE NICE TO PHONES AND TABLETS; NAMELY, BE MOBILE-FRIENDLY

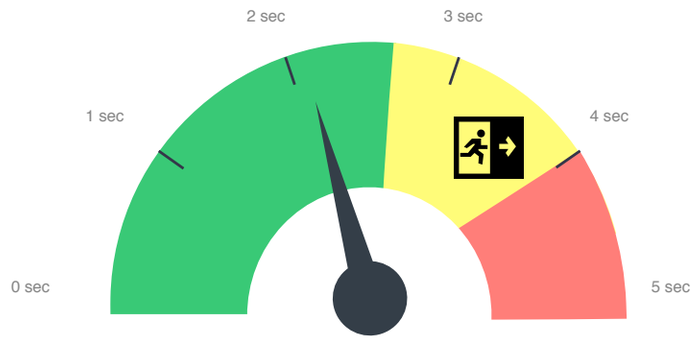
At least 2/3's of your site traffic will be from a mobile device (either a phone or tablet). This means that your site must be optimized for these small screens.

You can run a quick test to see how mobile-friendly your site is by going to http://bit.ly/2Ds4wz0. This test will notify you of any issues that you can either fix yourself or pass along to your site provider to address.

Focus #4

Speed, Speed, and More Speed

- choose the best image format
- compress JPEGS
- cache site resources
- test site speed



FOCUS POINT NUMBER FOUR IS TO ENSURE YOUR WEBSITE LOADS QUICKLY

Speed is the keyword here. 47% of people expect a website to load in less than 2 seconds, and 40% of people abandon a website that takes more than 3 seconds to load (*source: Kissmetrics: http://bit.ly/kdDwc6*).

See our little guy running away… that's the point almost half of people will leave if your site hasn't loaded.

So, how do you ensure your website is fast?

- When creating images, be sure to choose the best format for each image - http://bit.ly/2tD2RH6. If you use JPEGs, compression is your best friend.
- Free online photo editors are PhotoShop (http://bit.ly/2FHze97) and Pixlr (http://bit.ly/2FIdo5H).
- Cache your site resources - http://bit.ly/2FLEAQI. This is a technical step, and may need to be done by your web development company.
- Test your load time by going to http://bit.ly/2FIds5r. Anything under 2-3 seconds is acceptable.

Focus #5

A Secure Site is a Happy Site

All Sites Need to be Encrypted

- run your website over https
- this builds trust and prevents tampering
- free through *Let's Encrypt* and most website providers
- a secure site results in better SEO rankings
- Google will flag insecure sites as "not secure" starting in July, 2018

FOCUS POINT NUMBER 5 IS TO ENSURE YOUR WEBSITE IS SECURE

A website that is secure will be protected from tampering by intruders. You can tell if your site is secure by looking in the address bar… If you see *https*, then it is secure. If you see *http* (without the s), then it is not secure. The "s" means that it is secure.

Having a secure site will be in the best interest of visitors, since their use of your site will be encrypted. This prevents unauthorized monitoring by both legitimate companies (hotels or ISPs), and monitoring or misuse by hackers.

If you've created your own site, then contact your hosting provider about enabling https. If you use a company like Church Plant Media, or another company that provides websites, then contact them, as most will provide this level of security free of charge. We are in the process of rolling it out to all of our churches at no charge.

Be sure to enable https by July of 2018, as Google's Chrome browser will begin marking all insecure sites as "not secure" in the browser bar *(Source: Google: http://bit.ly/2Dpxtf1)*. This affects your search engine ranking, and will result in a lower level of trust with your site visitors.

Learn more at http://bit.ly/2FGw19T.

Again, if you have a Church Plant Media site, then we will upgrade you at no charge over the next few weeks.

Other Helpful Resources

- Need to film a welcome video for your site? Wistia has great resources and tutorials.
- CreationSwap and LightStock are great stock photo sites. Remember…. avoid stock photos of people.
- SEO (search engine optimization) is a must, and we've written a helpful article linked below.
- We offer free integration with Church Community Builder for any Converge church.
- For online giving, we recommend Simple Donation. Be sure to mention Church Plant Media when signing up, and they'll give you discounted pricing.
- Consider connection cards to carry with you at all times. We print through Overnight Prints.
- Monitor your website traffic for free using Google Analytics.

Other helpful resources:

• Filming a welcome video has never been easier. Check out walk-throughs at http://wi.st/2Ds0HtT.

•Great stock photo resources - http://bit.ly/2FLESag and http://bit.ly/2DrNVew (remember, try to avoid stock photos of people).

• We've written an SEO (search engine optimization) article that we give to our churches - http://bit.ly/2Gqqcij. This will be updated regularly.

• We integrate with Church Community Builder. Any church who uses CCB and Church Plant Media will be able to pull in events and small group information into their website. This avoids double data entry, and allows site visitors to quickly find a small group or event. We're bundling it at no charge for Converge churches. See the group finder at http://bit.ly/2Dt5XwZ and the events calendar at http://bit.ly/2FJPqa4.

• Online giving - we recommend Simple Donation (http://bit.ly/2Dsy1ka) - unlimited funds (tithe, general, missions, youth, etc), one-time and recurring giving, SMS/text giving, Church Community Builder and Fellowship 1 integration, donor statements via email, ability for donor to cover fees (we've found up to half of donors will cover the transaction fees). Be sure to mention Church Plant Media or Converge when signing up, and you'll get the first 6 months of monthly fees waived. Check out the overview video (http://bit.ly/2FCptNJ) and demo (http://bit.ly/2FEhG1N).

• We recommend that you carry connection cards with you at all times. Something the size of a business card that includes your church name, your name, and the church's website. So, the next time you meet someone at Starbucks and you're telling them about Jesus, you can leave the the card with them that has a call to action (to visit the site for more info). Check out the round cards at Overnight Prints (http://bit.ly/2GrQvo2).

• Monitor your website traffic by signing up for a free Google Analytics account. Using this, you'll be able to see what pages people are visiting, how long they stay on pages, what keywords they're using to find your site, etc. Use these valuable insights to customize your content and tailor your site to meet the ongoing needs of your visitors. You can sign up at http://bit.ly/2GtBGRV.

Church Plant Media + Converge Partnership

You will get:

- a design that works on all devices
- unlimited pages, events, blogs, & sermon profiles
- Twitter & Facebook integration
- podcasts
- password protection
- https encryption
- radius protection (meaning no other church in your area can have your design)
- free CCB integration
- discounted online giving
- online & phone support

Church Plant Media + Converge Partnership

Use coupon code “CONVERGE”

- Save 50% ($500) on the one-time setup fee
- Free Church Community Builder integration (normally $900)
- 6 months of waived monthly fees on Simple Donation’s online giving suite

Next Steps:
https://converge.churchplantmedia.com

Our normal website pricing is a one-time setup of $1000 (includes the design and Content Management System), and a $50 monthly fee (covers phone and online support, certain ongoing feature releases, hosting, and radius protection). Radius protection ensures that no other church within a 10 mile radius of your church will have the same design.

Any church or ministry that mentions the coupon code CONVERGE will save $500 on the set up fee, plus will receive our Church Community Builder integration for free (normally $900). Our CCB integration will allow you to enter events and small group information into CCB, and display that information on your website. It helps you avoid double data entry, and allows people to easily view events and search for small groups based on childcare availability, day of the week, etc. Note: you’ll need to obtain a CCB account through CCB.

So, normal pricing on everything above is $1900 to set up and $50 per month, but the CONVERGE coupon will bring it down to $500 for setup and $50 per month.

Also, as mentioned above, we’ve partnered with Simple Donation to offer online giving to all of our churches. Their normal pricing is $29 per month and 2.9% + 50 cents per transaction. Mention Church Plant Media or Converge when ordering with them and they’ll waive your first 6 months of monthly fees ($174 value). Check out the overview video (http://bit.ly/2FCptNJ) and demo (http://bit.ly/2FEhG1N).

Thank you for attending!

Next Steps:

https://converge.churchplantmedia.com