



5 *Key Principles of an Effective Web Ministry*

You have great ideas and important ministry goals, but you're not sure how to get started or how to implement them. We can help. We'll work with you every step of the way from idea through implementation to realize your desired ministry impact.



Every church that seeks to reach out to its attendees and the community needs to address the issue of building an effective Web ministry. In these technology-driven times, it's imperative to take Web ministry as seriously as any other ministry within your church. By Web ministry, we mean any ministry that takes place via technology communication such as e-mail, church Web site, blogs, you name it. Below are five key principles that we believe are integral to what an effective ministry should be; although every organization strives to meet different needs, the goal for effective communication remains the same.

1 Create a Memorable Web site Presence.

Dynamic, interactive content is the most vital part of your organization's Web site; although graphics branding are also important, this will not attract visitors to your site if the content isn't top-notch. Content that is always changing will attract visitors and allow people to feel that they are a part of the site. Interactive content will encourage your visitors to come back for more — to find out about the latest church announcements, volunteer needs, donation locations, financial issues, small groups, and classes and even listen to last week's sermon that they missed.

The content of a church Web site can be used as an extremely effective tool to draw people in, encourage them to become involved, keep them up-to-date with current events and ministry opportunities, and become a tool to drive your church's ministry efforts to your members, your community, and beyond.

When a church begins viewing its Web site as an outreach tool, it is possible to build a site that will serve multiple functions and succeed at fulfilling a special ministry functions across your entire organization. Content is not limited to a reposting of the Sunday bulletin, it can include many dynamic items such as explanations of new programs and classes, online registrations for all types of events, community resources, online donation engines, streamed sermons and so much more. It is even possible for a church's Web site to be an online portal for internal church communications.

2 Use Effective Communication Tools.

In order to effectively communicate, churches can utilize several online tools that assist in creating a powerful Web ministry. E-mail newsletter applications have become a wonderful way for churches to communicate with attendees, members, visitors, missionaries, youth — anyone that wants to receive information. Through secure e-mail newsletter applications that provide opt-in capabilities, churches can provide e-mail newsletters to meet the needs of its congregation, whether they send out one main e-mail newsletter for the church or one for each ministry within the church. Newer applications make it possible to customize the look and feel, layout, images, and more.

Providing online donation capabilities on your Web site is another way to increase communications from the church to its congregation. Enabling people to give online from any internet connection via your Web site can provide a freedom to people that encourages regular giving whether or not people are able to attend services each week. The online giving can integrate into a church's Web site and provide these services seamlessly, while making the whole process easy for churches to put into practice.

Posting your church's calendar online is another great way to encourage involvement and boost your Web ministry. There are always people who attend events based on what's in the Sunday bulletin. But what if you've missed the Sunday services due to travel or illness? How do you find out what events are happening in the upcoming week or month? By posting the calendar of public events online, churches can assist people with staying involved throughout their busy lives. You can even link to the calendar in the e-mail newsletter and encourage people to check out upcoming events for the church — now that's effective communications! Taking things a step further, your church can use technology tools to provide online registration and payments for events making it even simpler for people to become involved. People can view an event listing and choose to register for that event on the spot. For events that require payments, some systems can take payments via online checks or credit cards on the spot over the internet making registration that much easier. Event coordinators can then view and access lists of people registered and print out reports as needed.

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3 Encourage Online Involvement.

It's now possible to provide access to specific church information by logging in to a special section of a church's Web site. Similar to an intranet, where people need to have proper clearance to access a special site, churches can take advantage of Web software services built for this function to connect their membership database from their public Web site. This makes it possible for church leaders and staff to access member data from any internet connection. Vital information such as name and contact information plus activity details and notes can be viewed and edited making it simple for pastors to review contacts before visitations, and even login and note conversations and visits so that members' info is kept up-to-date and universally accessible by all. Moreover, some systems can even make it possible to pull mailing labels and do limited exports of data, browse directories, keep track of outreach opportunities, and send e-mail messages to individuals as well as groups. Now that's keeping in touch and staying involved.

For members, it can be an extremely powerful communications tool to give people the ability to see rosters of people in specific classes or groups, e-mail other group members, sign up for classes and activities, update their personal records and photos, and even view church directories online. Churches decide what level of access they want to give to members and provide secure information that can foster deeper connections and increased involvement.

4 Provide Small Groups Connections.

One of the reasons that small group campaigns often fail is that the administrative tools needed to assist with the registration and connection process just aren't in place. Managing small groups has come a long way from a simple roster list that gets filled out by the leader and turned into the church office. Through online access to church management software, leaders now have the ability to log in from their home computers and manage small groups. Some programs provide ways to communicate with members via e-mail, mark attendance, assign tasks to group members and leaders, create group Web pages, send reminders, and more. Software even provides a way for the staff in a church to track people who have expressed interest in groups and see which groups they join — or haven't joined — to determine who needs assistance. Overall, small groups management solutions offer innovative ideas for getting people connected and involved, thereby helping members build relationships and grow spiritually.

Whether large or small, churches of every size can benefit from implementing technology solutions to manage small groups. When your church is able to monitor small groups activities effectively, and even provide individual Web sites for small groups to post comments and keep in touch with one another, your church will most likely experience real growth through these lasting relationships that form via small groups. Meeting together in places outside the church building does more than just connect people that already attend your church; it is an evangelism tool to draw people in from the community and expand your ministry and your church.

5 Discover a New Way to Manage Volunteers.

There are two ways that churches can streamline and create efficiencies as they relate to the volunteer management process: 1) provide staff and lay leaders with technology tools to communicate and fill volunteer needs. 2) provide ways for potential volunteers to search and locate the best fit volunteer opportunities.

Instead of maintaining the volunteer workflow within the church office, or bogging down one person with the responsibility of managing all open volunteer positions, technology offers ways to streamline this process and take the entire burden off of one person, or several people. New technology online tools can put volunteer management into the hands of those who are searching for volunteers: ministry coordinators and lay leaders within your church.

Online software applications can be accessed through a church Web site, making it possible for church staff and lay leaders to post volunteer openings online and for volunteers to sign up online. Instead of waiting for a phone call or checking off boxes in the church bulletin, attendees can go online and view possible openings whenever they want to. Users can easily set up the attributes and qualifications used in their church, allow members and attendees to select the attributes and qualifications that describe themselves, create volunteer needs or openings, let people search for the ones that interest them, and allow staff and leaders with permissions to assign volunteers to fulfill the available needs. It's easy to see that managing volunteers online and shifting the burden off one person and spreading over many can be of huge benefit to any church — small or large.



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