



The Great Unveiling

WEBSITE UPDATE

From ACS Technologies, Partnering
With Churches for 25 Years

It's time to update your Website. Old copy, out-of-date images, events that have already passed... many churches suffer from not having enough time to regularly update their Website, and so this is a call to arms! Your Website shouldn't be a stagnant organism; it should be a living, breathing being that needs constant care, love and attention if it is going to represent your church and serve a purpose to your members and prospects. Here is a guide to help you freshen your site and help it maintain its usefulness in an increasingly changing online environment.

1. Clean it Up

Ever visited a Website, read an interesting blurb about an upcoming concert, then clicked the link only to get a "Page Not Found" error? This is frustrating for you, and it is frustrating for visitors when it happens on your site. Testing and cleaning up old links is just one small way you can freshen up your site and increase its usefulness. Visit <http://validator.w3.org/checklink> and enter the link address and this useful tool can help you ensure that all of your links are work.

Go through your site and look at all the photos. If the majority of the images are of events that happened more than a year ago, it's time to update your site. Are there photos of new events and ministries that might better reflect the church's mission and vision? Have you added on to your church building, but the old photo is still posted online? It is time to update that as well. You might also consider revising the look and feel of your site. Changing up the home page and moving items around can provide interest and encourage people to come back to your site to check out what's different.

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2. Focus Your Content

Old content, vague information and outdated contact information all need to be updated. Has your church mission and vision changed? Have you updated the "About" section for your church in the last two years? If not, spending a few hours updating this information online can greatly improve your first impression to site visitors. Make sure to add key contacts and their phone or email addresses. List each of your groups and their purpose. Displaying a unified appearance between the physical church and the online image presented on behalf of your church is very important. New visitors might search for your church online and review information before coming to a service. Having the most up-to-date content online will ensure that they are presented with an accurate view of what your church is all about.

Ever wondered what the name of that traveling ministry was that visited the church two weeks ago but threw out your bulletin already? Housing a bulletin archive online so that church members can go back and look at various items in past church bulletins could be very helpful. Providing an online archive of sermon texts, and even streaming the sermon audio or video from your site is also an extremely valuable resource. Showcasing an online calendar of church events is very useful to everyone. No need to call up the

church to double check on Bible study dates and times, just check out the Website. Website tools from ACS Technologies' Extend Platform (www.extendplatform.com) can make it simple to update content, add or edit photos from your site and much more.

Don't forget to update Web pages describing upcoming fiscal campaigns and drives so that members have an idea of new programs and requests for donations. The Web is a great way to post renderings of new building plans, budgetary information and other information that isn't readily available at church to help show church members how funds will be allocated for new building plans. Be sure to include service times and directions to the church so visitors can find you. Lastly, make sure to post special holiday schedules for services and other church events.

3. Provide New Services

Does your church already take contributions online? By adding this feature, you can make it possible for people who travel on business frequently to easily donate and tithe online even if they can't make it to church. Do you have a large, active congregation that is constantly growing and changing? Integrate an online component to your church management software program such as AccessACS (<http://www.acstechnologies.com/products/accessacs>) to your Website and enable members to login online and update their personal information, get contact information for specific Bible study groups they belong to, e-mail other church members, submit prayer requests and even submit calendar activities—all through a secure online section of your Website. Products like AccessACS even allow church staff to access their church database online from any location, making it easier to work from home or the road.

Now you have quite a long to-do list! Don't worry; the burden need not fall all on one person's shoulders. If your site is built with the Extend Platform, rights can be given to different people within each specific church ministry so that pages can be updated by multiple people and the responsibility can be shared. Most importantly, by thinking about your church Web site daily, you can keep it fresh little by little so that it never goes out to date—that's the goal! ❖

Lauren Hunter is a trade writer and public relations consultant specializing in the faith-based and nonprofit technology markets. She currently consults to ACS Technologies as public relations manager. ACS Technologies serves over 20,000 churches, schools and other faith-based organizations with its award winning software solutions. For more information on ACS, please visit <http://www.acstechnologies.com> or email lauren@laurenhunter.net.