

TOPTIPS

WEBSITE DOs AND DONTs

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Many people use the internet for finding out information, and this includes finding out information on local churches. In fact, wherever I've been living, when I first move there, I've always looked on the internet to see what churches were in the area, and what they could offer. With that in mind, not only is it important to have a website for your church, it is also important that it is a good one!

Here is a simple list of a few dos and don'ts when it comes to creating a website. We will be producing more in depth Top Tips over the next few months.

DOs

THINK WHY.

Why do you want a website? What is the aim of it? These are some of the questions you need to ask before you begin. It is important to establish why you want a website. If you don't know why you're doing it, the chances of it being a success are lot less. For example, you might want to have a website for keeping your church members up to date with events happening within church life. Alternatively you may see your website as an evangelistic tool. Both of these options represent two different ways of approaching the project.

CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE.

Linked in with thinking why you are doing it, you need to think who you are aiming it at. This will then to a certain extent dictate what sort of content you put on it, and also the look and feel of the design. For instance, if you are targeting purely young people, then your website will need to have a look and feel that is relevant to that specific group. Try putting yourself in the user's shoes – if you were visiting the site, what would you want to see/find?

KEEP THE TEXT SIMPLE.

When people visit a website, they do so with the intention of getting particular bits of information. They don't visit with the intention to read long 'padded out paragraphs' as if it were a book. This is a common problem. You need to keep your text simple and to the point. Don't over elaborate where you don't need to.

EASY NAVIGATION.

Enabling people to find what they want on your site is perhaps the most important part to get right. If people can't find what their looking for, then the site hasn't fulfilled its purpose. You can aid the navigation by using a clear and straightforward menu, with links people understand, and clear ways of progressing from each page, without confusing your visitor.

USE PHOTOS.

Nothing conveys something quite as good as a photo. Text is all well and good, but if you accompany text with a photo or picture, it brings that text to life. People visiting your site will want to see what happens at your church, so why not use photos of people and recent events.

Continued overleaf...

DONTs

BE TOO COMPLICATED.

You don't need to create an all singing all dancing website straight away. It's much better to start small, and develop the site over time, adding more features. It is far easier getting something simple set up than to try and get everything sorted in one go.

GO CRAZY WITH COLOURS.

As tempting as it may be, you don't need to use every colour you can think of! Keep the colour scheme simple, and only use three or four main colours. If your website is attractive and easy to read, people will stay.

BE INCONSISTENT.

Try and maintain the same look throughout the site. This can be achieved by having some continuity throughout your website in the form of fonts, colours and designs. Don't introduce loads of different fonts. Have one font style for the main text, one for headings, one for links etc and keep these fonts going throughout the site. The same goes for the design of the pages. Have a template and use that for the design of each page so that the overall look of each page is the same.

FORGET TO UPDATE IT.

It's amazing how many churches have a website but don't keep it updated. One of the most important things is to keep the content up to date and relevant. There's no point having details of event's that happened 2 years ago! If a visitor sees the line 'last updated in....' and it's not current, then it send a bad signal.