50

COMMON MISTAKES ON CHURCH WEBSITES

ARE THESE TRANSGRESSIONS HINDERING YOUR WEBSITE FROM BEING FRUITFUL?
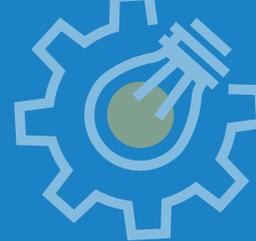
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INTRODUCTION

Do you want your church website to be an effective ministry tool?

If you do, what would you like your church website to accomplish? Maybe you want it to draw new visitors to your weekend services. On the other hand, you might use it to keep your congregation connected and informed. Or perhaps, both!

Regardless, is your church website meeting its goals? If you're pausing to reflect on this question, there's a good chance that your website can be achieving much more for your church!

Did you know that most church websites fail to achieve their goals unless they are **planned**, **designed**, and **executed** well?

Well, we have some good news! We have compiled a list of **50 common mistakes** that could be preventing your church website from being a useful ministry tool. Check out this list to identify the online transgressions that your website may be guilty of, and learn how to redeem it.

46%

of people decided to visit a church after checking out its website.*

Do you encourage people to visit your church website?

1. LACK OF PROPER PLANNING

This first section highlights seven common errors that most churches make while they start working on their websites.

1 **Not praying for your website:** Like most other churches you probably uphold all your ministries in prayer. What about your church website? When did you last pray for your website? Your church website is also a tool for your ministry. So, don't forget to uphold it in prayer as well.

2 **Getting your website built by an amateur.** Your church website plays a crucial role in your outreach efforts because it's the only 24/7 source of information about your church. So, don't just ask anyone in your congregation who is good with computers to build it. Instead, ensure that your website is designed by skilled professionals, be it in-house or out-sourced.

Hire a skilled professional to build your church website.

1. LACK OF PROPER PLANNING

3

Not specifying website goals: Do you know what the goals of your website are? Perhaps you want your church website to offer visitors information about your service timings and location. Or, maybe you would like it to offer recent sermons, resources, and more. Clearly write down the goals and objectives of your website before you start to build it.

4

Focusing on the building instead of people: Isn't it more impactful to read about people's testimonies than about the history of a building? Ensure that real stories of people in your church are given more visibility than your church building and its history.

5

Not having proper access to all pages: A lot of church websites tend to have bad website architecture because their pages are built on the fly. As a result, certain pages get hidden in obscure parts of the website.
Put together a proper website architecture beforehand to ensure that visitors can easily access any page on your website.

Highlight the testimonies of your church members.

1. LACK OF PROPER PLANNING

6 **Not using well-thought-out URLs:** Don't just go for the first URL that comes to your mind. Instead, take sometime to think about a memorable and concise URL. Most of the .com extensions of your desirable domains are probably already taken. So, consider a .church domain for your website.

7 **Not pointing your social media channels to your church website:** Your social networking profiles and church websites need to be well integrated. Do your social media channels clearly direct visitors to your website? Make sure that your church's social networking sites clearly and visibly point to your website.

Ensure that your church's social media profiles point to the website.

64%

of church-goers say the church website is important in facilitating participation in church. *

Is your website encouraging your congregation to participate in church?

2. INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

In this section we have zeroed down on 15 communication mistakes that many churches make on their websites.

8

Not reflecting the true character of the church: Your website is the virtual representation of your church. Does your website truly reflect the character of your church? For example, if outreach is at the heart of your church's vision, then make sure that the images, content, and all other website elements make that obvious.

9

Giving an unclear message about what to expect on a visit: Make sure that your website conveys the right message about what a typical church day would look like. Often, churches only talk about special Sunday services. You want first-time visitors to know exactly what to expect. So, remember to include a 'What to Expect' or 'Plan Your Visit' section on your website.

10

Failing to keep the website simple: Did you know that most people usually scan through content online? How can you ensure that your website engages your visitors? By using language that is simple, succinct, and easy to understand!

Clearly tell visitors what to expect during a typical Sunday service.
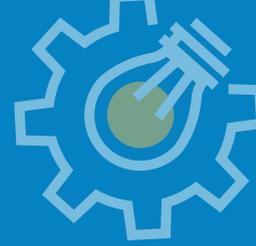
2. INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

11 **Using 'churchy' jargon on the website:** Remember that your target audience may include the unchurched. Therefore, the language and tone usage on your website also needs to address this group. Avoid typical 'churchy' jargon that can be unfamiliar and make non-Christians feel alienated.

12 **Putting all your theology on the home page:** Pastor, how do you greet people in real life, especially for the first time? Surely not with your statement of belief! Similarly, your church website should greet and welcome your visitors before it shares your theology. Therefore, do not place your statement of belief on your home page, but in another tab or page.

13 **Having an ambiguous and uninteresting statement of belief:** Your statement of belief describes what your church believes in. Therefore, it needs to be clearly spelled out in a manner that first-time visitors can easily understand. Additionally, consider using Bible verses to back up your statement where required.

Place your statement of belief in a separate tab or page instead of the home page.

2. INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

14 **Including either too little information or an excess of it:** Your website needs to have the right balance of information. Don't starve the website with minimal information about your church, but don't overcrowd the pages either. Remember to ask your friends and church members for their feedback on the website content. In fact, ask them to specify what information they think is missing or unnecessary and then edit accordingly.

15 **Not including staff information:** It is always a good idea to include information about your entire church leadership team rather than just the pastor. Reading about the team can give newcomers a good idea about your church and its congregation. Does your website introduce your whole church team or just your pastor?

16 **Not giving prominence to essential information:** Most visitors to your website will look for details like service timings, location, and contact information. Is this key information highlighted on your website? Make sure that this information is prominently placed on your home page and not in any obscure corner.

Introduce your church staff, not just your pastor.

44%

of website visitors will leave an organisation's website if it has no contact information or phone number. *

Is your contact information easily accessible to your website visitors?

2. INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

17 **Omitting information about special events and holy days:** Newcomers often attend specific church programs and services on special occasions. Hence, clearly highlight details of such events and programs on your home page.

18 **Not including clear call-to-actions:** A call-to-action (CTA) nudges visitors to take an action instantly. Have you placed relevant CTAs on different sections of your wesite? If you have, are these CTAs pointing to clear destinations? Or, are they sending multiple messages. A 'Join Us For Coffee First?' CTA on your 'Plan Your Visit' page will encourage the audience to take that next step.

19 **Asking for money without providing basic details:** Are you asking for funds on your website without telling people where you will be spending it? Many churches use the 'Give' or 'Donate' button without mentioning how and where those funds will be used. People want to know where and how their money will be used before they part with it. Therefore, clearly state how you intend to use this money.

> **Don't ask for donations without explaining how you plan to spend the money.**
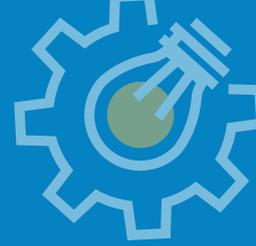
2. INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

20 **Not mentioning basic information at the footer of your website:** People instinctively tend to scroll right down to look for more information. Therefore, the website footer needs to show basic details such as contact information and address, at all times.

21 **Not clearly stating copyrights and website policies:** A copyright clause protects your church website's content and pictures, while a privacy policy and disclaimer assure your visitors that any data they enter on your website will not be misused. Have you clearly stated your copyright clause and website policies on your website? In addition, remember to give due credit to the original owner of any excerpts or images that you use on your website.

22 **Not having an engaging home page:** Did you know that your home page has around 8 seconds to captivate the first-time visitor? In a matter of a few seconds, visitors should be able to assess your church's offerings, how it fits into their lives, as well as what action they should take instantly (CTA). Does your church website pass this 'grunt' test?

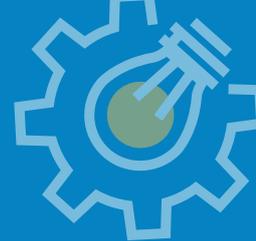**Add your contact details to the footer of the website.**

94%

of people cited poor web design as the reason they mistrusted or rejected a website. *

This next section will help you change these numbers around. Keep reading!

* Source: Forbes - Full Impact of Web Design

3. DISCONNECTED DESIGN

Design is one of the most crucial elements of any website. Watch out for these 15 dangerous design errors in yours.

23 **Designing your website for regular attendees only:** Most churches make the mistake of assuming that their website's target audience is just their congregation. Did you know that over 17 million non-churchgoers visit the website of a local church or place of worship in a year?[1] Therefore, remember to include sections like 'Plan Your Visit,' 'I'm New,' and 'What to Expect' on your website.

24 **Ignoring mobile users:** Do keep in mind that the number of mobile Internet users is growing everyday. In fact, figures suggest that more than 63.4 percent of mobile phone users will access online content through their devices in 2017.[2] Is your website mobile friendly?

25 **Neglecting the importance of a 'Sermon' tab:** Your church sermons are a good reflection of what your church services are like. Therefore, you need to upload either all or at least the latest sermons on your website. Give visitors a chance to know your church's teaching in advance!

Ensure that your website is mobile friendly and responsive.

1 Source: Great Matter Research - Online Church
2 Source: Statista - Mobile Internet
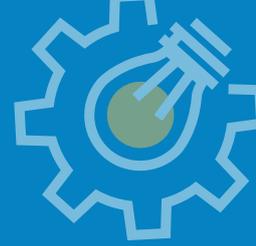
3. DISCONNECTED DESIGN

26 **Leaving out the 'Meet Our Members' page:** Let's be honest - most websites don't make people feel welcome. People who are looking for a church, are looking for a community. How can your website show visitors a glimpse of church and community life? You can start by introducing a few families from church. In fact, a short video clip with a few members inviting newcomers for coffee will make your website more inviting.

27 **Highlighting donations at the start:** Is a 'Donate' or 'Give' button the first thing that's visible on your website? You need to establish a connection with your visitors, before you can ask for any money. So, don't put a 'Donate' button prominently on your home page. Instead, include such a CTA in a section where you explain how you are serving and impacting the community.

28 **Using cumbersome navigation systems:** If visitors don't easily find what they are looking for, they will not stick around on your website. Make sure that your website is easy to navigate so that users are not required to click on any unnecessary tabs. .

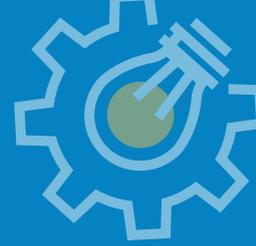**Introduce a few of your church members on the website.**
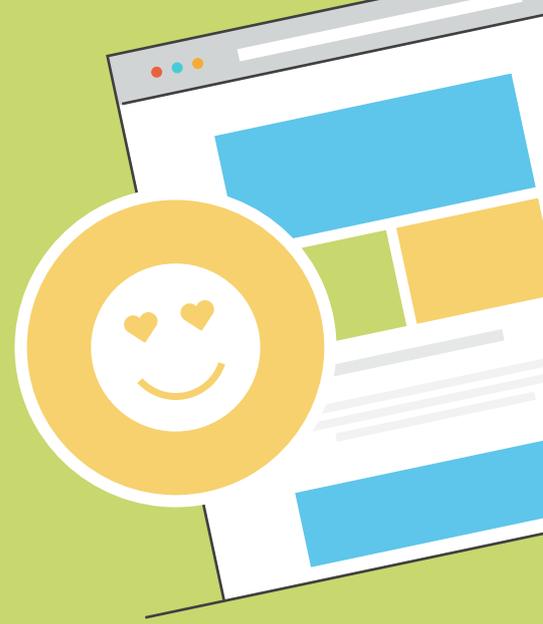
8 seconds

Your church website only has 8 seconds to make a good first impression on a visitor.*

Does your website engage visitors from the word go? Or, do visitors come to your website and move on?

* Source: Social Media Contractors

3. DISCONNECTED DESIGN

29 **Having an unnecessary login box:** Is any information or resource on your website exclusively for your church members? If not, a login box on your website is unnecessary. However, if you do have exclusive material for members then remember to include a login option on the website footer, too.

30 **Having a text-heavy website:** Just seeing black and white text on a website page - let alone reading it - is dull and monotonous! Remember to use either good-quality images or videos to make your website vibrant and refreshing to the eye. Make sure to choose backgrounds that allow for easy reading of text.

31 **Having an uninspiring contact page:** Most contact pages on websites don't inspire people to reach out to their company or organisation. Don't make the same mistake! Your contact page gives you another opportunity to connect with the visitor. Therefore, personalise this page to make it inviting. Encourage new visitors to contact you so that somebody from the church team can either call them or meet them for coffee.

Personalise your contact page to make it more inviting.
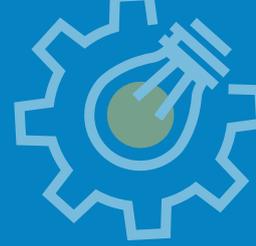
3. DISCONNECTED DESIGN

32 **Using unnecessary special effects:** Some features that you may perceive as 'cool' - such as sliding images and fading texts - are often quite annoying to a visitor. They are not only unappealing, but also distracting, and ultimately force people to leave your website. Therefore, skip any effects that are not necessary.

33 **Not using high-quality images:** Many church websites use poor-quality images, which comes across as unattractive and unprofessional. While it is important to use high-resolution images, it is equally important to place images wisely. For example, you can use a striking image on your home page, but your contact page might not need an image at all. So, do away with an image if it isn't accelerating the purpose of that Web page.

34 **Using stock photography:** Have you noticed how many church websites use the same pictures? The use of stock photography on your website will fail to capture the unique character of your church. Instead, hire a good photographer to capture images of real people and moments in your church.

Use images of real moments and real people in your church.

3. DISCONNECTED DESIGN

35 **Allowing inconsistencies in content and design:** How often have you seen websites with over four different fonts fighting for your attention? Don't make the same mistake on your website! Make sure that the font styles and image sizes are consistent throughout the website. Pick a font that works for you, and choose three sizes for headings, subheadings, and paragraphs. Finally, don't forget to ask your friends for their feedback on the font.

36 **Not thinking about visitors who get lost on your website:** It's not unusual for people to stumble upon a 404 error page on your website. This usually happens when there is a broken link on your website. However, a 404 error page need not end your interaction with the visitor. Remember to design a relevant 404 error page to lead your visitors back to your website, and in style!

37 **Having a boring website:** Doesn't every church want people to enjoy attending its services? Likewise, your website needs to be enjoyable for the visitor. Ask your church members to rate their experience on your website on a scale of 1 to 10. Remember to ask for their suggestions as well.

> Design a 404 error page to direct visitors back to your website.

66%

of the time spent on the Internet is via mobile devices.*

Is your website mobile responsive and updated for multiple screen sizes?

* Source: Comscore

4. MISSING OUT ON MAINTENANCE

Although a key stage, the maintenance of church websites is often neglected. We have highlighted 13 mistakes to avoid in this regard.

38 **Neglecting website maintenance and constant updates:** Pastor, doesn't leading your church to healthy growth require a constant investment of time and effort? Similarly, your website needs constant upkeep. Review all your Web pages, including blogs and events, periodically to ensure that the information is up to date at all times. In fact, consider assigning this responsibility to a particular person on your team.

39 **Approaching your website as a one-time effort:** If you want your website to continue to bear fruit, you will need to frequently measure and improve its performance. Do you have monthly meetings to discuss the effectiveness of your website? Use tools such as Google Analytics to get insights about the performance of your website. These insights will enable you to periodically tweak the website content for better effectiveness.

Delegate someone to maintain and update the website.

4. MISSING OUT ON MAINTENANCE

40 **Not having a prompt support team:** Isn't it a joy to hear from people who want to come to church? It is equally important that you are able to respond to them. Visitors may have questions about church timings, theology, or faith, and you need to be able to respond promptly. Therefore, designate people to attend to any queries made through calls or e-mails.

41 **Not implementing analytics:** Do you know if your church website is engaging visitors like you want it to? Check out Google Analytics and Google Webmaster so that you can study and measure a visitor's engagement on your website. Remember to use the data to identify areas of improvement on your website.

42 **Not embedding robot.txt files:** A robot.txt file is useful when your website provides resources exclusively for your church members via a login facility. Without a robot.txt file, you are giving search engine crawlers access to every single section on your website. Do you want to prevent search engines to access certain information on your website? If you do, embed a robot.txt file on your website.

Monitor your website's performance with analytics tools.
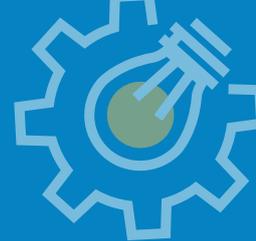
39%

of people will stop engaging with a website if images won't load or take too long to load. *

When was the last time that you tested how long it takes for images to load on your website?

4. MISSING OUT ON MAINTENANCE

43

Neglecting the importance of SEO: Search Engine Optimization (SEO) enables your website to show up on relevant searches on search engines like Google. Without implementing SEO, your church website will not be visible to anyone looking for a church in your city. Therefore, it is essential that you get an SEO expert onboard. In addition, refer to tools like Google Adwords to find out what keywords people are using to search for churches, community, ministry, etc. Additionally, make sure that you include these keywords in your website.

44

Not testing the download times: People don't like to wait for a page to load on their screens. Avoid using unnecessary special effects and heavy images to ensure that your website loads faster.

45

Auto playing video and audio: Many websites make the mistake of automatically playing a video or audio when one arrives on their home page. Make sure any audio or video on your website starts on mute. Plus, give visitors the ability to control the volume or switch off the video/audio.

Avoid unnecessary special effects that can increase your website's load time.

4. MISSING OUT ON MAINTENANCE

46 **Not including a sitemap:** Do you want your website to show up in relevant Google searches? A sitemap enables search engines to navigate your website and access data from specific sections with ease. So, make sure that there is a sitemap on the website footer so that your website doesn't remain invisible to your target audience.

47 **Not testing thoroughly:** A small error can diminish the impact of an otherwise stunning website. Make sure that a number of eyes review the website. Ask your team members to test every link and button on your website across different devices and browsers. Moreover, ask someone to proofread each page of your website and look out for any grammatical errors, spacing inconsistencies, and alignment issues.

48 **Not having a content calendar:** When did you last update the content on your website? You need to ensure that your website has relevant and trendy content. Make a content calendar with details of what content you should post when, to ensure that the content on your website remains fresh at all times.

Test your website on different devices and browsers.

4. MISSING OUT ON MAINTENANCE

49 **Not implementing Google Places:** Wouldn't it be great if all your church details would be instantly visible to anyone looking for a church in your city on Google? Google Places is a tool that can help you manage your church's presence on this search engine giant. Sign up for Google Places so that details like your church's address, map, contact details, and service timings clearly show up on search results.

50 **Not running a pilot version:** Ask your entire team to test out the website before you start telling others about it. Tell them to check and re-check every element on the website. Keep whatever adds to your website's purpose, and eliminate the rest. It's also good to ask your unchurched friends for feedback - what better way to let them know about your church and ease in an invitation as well?

> Ask your entire team to test out the website before the launch.

CONCLUSION

How many of these online transgressions are hindering your church website from being fruitful?

We hope that this e-book has helped you identify the common mistakes that may be plaguing your church website.

If you found this e-book helpful, you will love similar resources that we have designed for church leaders like you! Every week, the Abide team writes and shares blogs with tips, tools and insights to help churches better engage their congregations and communities online.

These blogs cover a range of relevant topics - right from tips for building effective **social media campaigns** and writing **impactful blogs** to information about **awesome design** and **communication tools** for your ministry.

So click the below button and learn one new way to connect better with today's digital generation - every week!

GET STARTED TODAY!
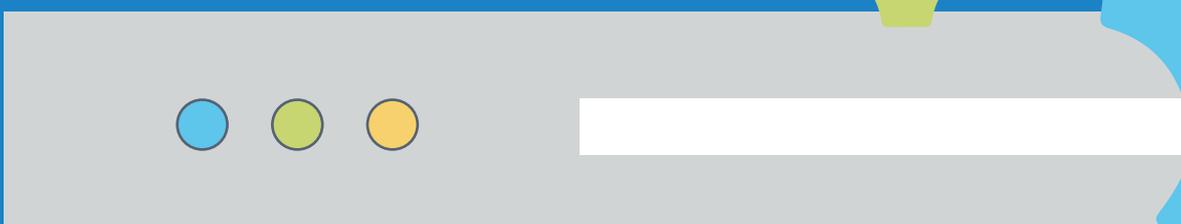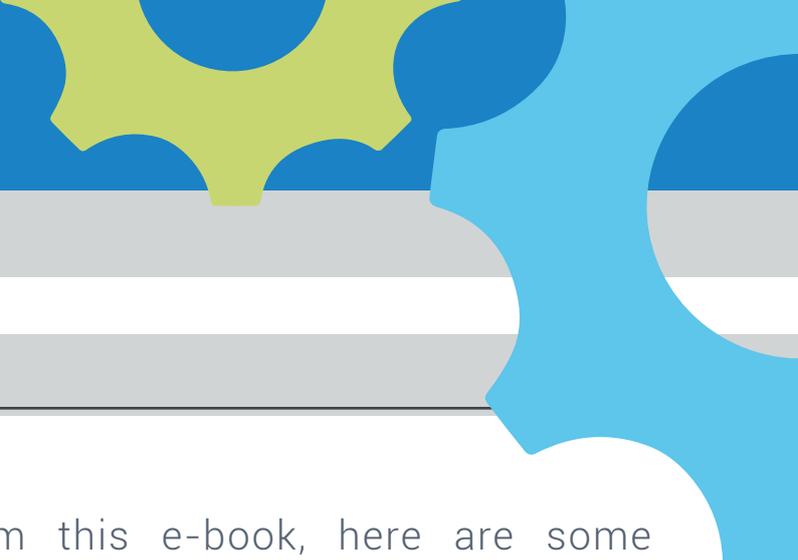
If you have benefitted from this e-book, here are some related resources that will further help transform your church website into a strategic ministry tool. Click these blog titles to read these posts.

- **Why Your Church Website Needs a Good Design**

- **8 Questions Your Church Website Needs To Answer**

- **10 Attractive Website Templates for Your Church**

- **10 Key Elements Every Church Website Should Have**

Or, join hundreds of other pastors and get such resources sent every week straight into your inbox, so that you can connect better with today's digital generation!

GET STARTED TODAY!

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Abide is a group of digital marketers that is passionate about serving those in ministry. Our aim is to bless church leaders like you with the best resources and tools out there so that you can thrive online.

In fact, we'd love to feature stories of real pastors and churches as they use technology and the Internet for God's glory. Contact us today so that we can share and celebrate your story with our ever-growing tribe of pastors and church leaders.

✉️ **hello@abideconnect.com**

f **abideconnect**

PASTOR, WANT TO CONNECT BETTER WITH TODAY'S DIGITAL GENERATION?

YES, GET ME STARTED!