

Is Your Website Really Working?

“If you’re not found in a Google search for churches in your area, you don’t exist to people moving into town.” That quote, by church planter and pastors.com editor Brandon Cox may be a painful truth to you, but it is a truth nevertheless.

The importance of a well thought out and designed website cannot be overstated.

Today’s rapidly changing patterns of communication are founded within the digital world, and are only increasing in importance. Last year, the number of networked devices in the world DOUBLED the global population.

It is vitally important that you understand the way your viewers are viewing and using your website – not just your members and regular attenders.

Solution #1: Understand how users *really* use the Web

THE QUICK SUMMARY - [Don't Make Me Think](#) by Steve Krug

Since *Don't Make Me Think* was first published in 2000, hundreds of thousands of Web designers and developers have relied on usability guru Steve Krug’s guide to help them understand the principles of intuitive navigation and information design. Witty, commonsensical, and eminently practical, it’s one of the best-loved and most recommended books on the subject.

Now Steve returns with fresh perspective to reexamine the principles that made *Don't Make Me Think* a classic—with updated examples and a new chapter on mobile usability. And it’s still short, profusely illustrated...and best of all—fun to read.

If you’ve read it before, you’ll rediscover what made *Don't Make Me Think* so essential to Web designers and developers around the world. If you’ve never read it, you’ll see why so many people have said it should be required reading for anyone working on websites.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

According to statistics released by Intel, here is a sampling of what happens in one minute of Internet use:

- 31,773 hours of music is played on Pandora
- 38,194 photos are uploaded on Instagram
- 138,889 hours of video are watched on YouTube
- 347,222 Tweets occur on Twitter
- 1 million searches occur on Google
- 9 million messages are sent on Facebook

Along with other sources, that’s an estimated 1,572,877 GB of global intellectual property data

transferred every minute of every day.

Now, **how's your church going to compete with that?**

When it comes to websites, we're thinking "great literature" while the user's reality is much closer to "billboard going by at 60 miles an hour."

What readers actually do most of the time (if we're lucky) is *glance* at each new page, *scan* some of the text, and click on the first link that catches their interest or vaguely resembles the thing they're looking for. There are almost always large parts of the page that they don't even look at.

It makes sense that we picture a more rational, attentive user when we're designing pages. It's only natural to assume that everyone used the Web the same way we do, and - like everyone else - we tend to think that our own behavior is much more orderly and sensible than it really is.

If you want to design effective Web pages, you have to learn to live with three facts about real-world Web use:

- **We don't read pages. We scan them.** One of the very few well-documented facts about Web use is that people tend to spend very little time reading most Web pages. Instead, we scan (or skim) them, looking for words or phrases that catch our eye.
- **We don't make optimal choices. We satisfice.** Most of the time readers don't scan all available options and choose the best one. Instead, they choose the first reasonable option, a strategy known as satisficing (a cross between satisfying and sufficing).
- **We don't figure out how things work.** We muddle through. Very few people take the time to read instructions. Instead, we forge ahead and muddle through, making up our own vaguely plausible stories about what we're doing and why it works.

Steve Krug, [*Don't Make Me Think*](#)

A NEXT STEP

At your next leadership team meeting, ask your team the following three questions about your church website in one minute's time:

1. **Are we optimized for mobile devices? *Hone for the Phone.***

Roughly nine-in-ten American adults own a mobile phone of some kind, with mobile use continuing to rise while laptop use declines. Many people are using their phones for maps and directions. Mobile browser optimization is not a passing fad. If a guest has to go through a series of pinches, scrolls, minuscule menu drop-downs and the inevitable fat-finger related back arrow taps to get to any viewable information on their phone, they most likely already wonder about your ability to connect with them.

2. **Who is our audience? *Gear for Guests.***

Somewhere around 90% of church guests visit your website **before they ever set foot** on your campus. And most are really just trying to figure out what time they need to wake up to get the kids ready and leave the house on time. Inversely, countless hours are spent designing and writing pages of content that the average church member does not even view, beyond last week's sermon audio or video. It's not a stretch to apply Pareto's oft-used principle to the church website as well: 80% of the information on most church websites is geared for 20% of the users.

3. **Is it up to date? *Check for Freshness.***

If overwhelming the guest is not enough reason to simplify your web presence, remembering that the more announcements, events, and programmatic presence your website contains, the more **constant maintenance** it will take to keep it current and relevant. Most likely, the only people looking at those kids ministry announcements from last month are the ones deciding if they will bring their kids there for the first time this weekend. Keep your website fresh with automated social media feeds, impacting stories of life change via video and staff-wide content ownership.

How will you make sure your church is using the next minute to communicate the greatest message of all?

*This is part of a weekly series posting content from one of the most innovative content sources in the church world: **SUMS Remix** Book Summaries for church leaders. SUMS Remix takes a practical problem in the church and looks at it with three solutions; and each solution is taken from a different book. As a church leader you get to scan relevant books based on practical tools and solutions to real ministry problems, not just by the cover of the book. Each post will have the edition number which shows the year and what number it is in the overall sequence. (SUMS provides 26 issues per year, delivered every other week to your inbox).*

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