Title: Facebook Fan Page or Website - Where Should I Sta

Subtitle: Web Strategies

Second Subtitle: #0 My Church Doesn't Have a Web Site - Should It Ge

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Summary: 1. Having a web presence is no longer a nicety, but a necessit
2. You have limitations, as do the various options for establishing your w
3. It's not that difficult or stressful to make a decision, once you know w

There are lots of ways to communicate online and there are a variety of
focus your attention? Where should you start? Website? Facebook? Twitt
Blogspot? Tumblr? YouTube? MySpace?

Well, you get the idea - there are a lot of facets to your online presence
what others have to say about building your online identity and communic

You may be faced with this question and wonder how to approach it. The
several more to help us answer it - what is the barrier to entry and retu
The Big 3 - Time, Talent and Money

   How much time do you have?
   How much skill do you have?
   How much money do you have?

Odd how it these 3 are ever-present in making decisions. They also must
combination. If you aren't pressed for time, or have a lot of time to spar
money goes down. If your project has a short timeline, you'll need to ha
money to complete the launch on time. Likewise, if you have a fair amou
the project sooner, relying on fewer outside resources (money). Be sure
understanding of these 3 resources as you begin your adventure of comm
online.
If you don't have time, skill or money, you will need a different set of to
me, they are out there!
Strategy and Maintenance
Once you've established the parameters of your project, you'll need to
that with your church's ministry and message -

   How will people find out about you? (Discovery)
   How will they know when you've posted something new? (Notifications)
   How will you maintain your information or add functionality? (Ease of U
   How will you moderate your information? (Moderation)

These last questions help determine the nuts and bolts for delivering you

the Field of Dreams, where if you build it they will come. You need to te
how to find you. You need to let them know when you've added somethin
spread your message to other listeners and stay in touch with those who
and money do play a part in answering these questions, but these effort
your launch had a fixed duration and resource expenditure.

So far, we still haven't directly answered our burning question - Facebo
more disclaimer before we get to the specifics - these 2 things are not r
the same purpose in different ways. Choosing 1 will not prevent you, no
developing the other. In fact, your overall strategy should include your
facets of your online message for your church or ministry. This is all ab
your efforts, given the 2 primary options.

Let's see how the 2 Big Choices measure up against the Big 3.

Time

Most people will say they have more time than money, but that isn't alwa
your own website, you'll need to have some extra time. First, you'll need
(register) your domain name (web address). This can be rather simple, es
select is available and you don't need to find an alternative. But, with ho
similar name, you'll probably find yourself using a combination of your cl
After you get your domain name, you'll need to get a place for your site
and a wide range of prices, but you should be able to find a suitable hos
add your site in a matter of a few hours. It can take up to a day or 2 for
able to find your site, so plan on being viewing a site on a new domain a
hours of starting. That is assuming you have content ready to publish.

The design, building and deploying a new website generally requires som
rework before you launch. There are a myriad of decisions to make about
functionality and maintenance. Depending on your organization, you may
work out all those details. If you already have a detailed plan for your w
and built, 1 to 2 weeks is not a unreasonable length of time for this to ta
Contrast all this with creating a fan page on Facebook. Select a page na
than selecting and acquiring a domain name. Domain names usually go m
name in Facebook. So, a few minutes is all it takes.

No need to look for a host - your fan page will live on Facebook. No time
is instantly available once you publish it.

Design, build, structure and functionality are also rather simple with Fac
elaborate and have custom applications written for you, but there are alr
applications available for you to choose from to complete the constructio
yourself a 1/2 day for research and selection of a few basic applications
time to figure out what you'd like to use.

The summary - Basic Website: 2 days - 2 (or more) weeks; Facebook: 1/2

Talent

Not only do you need some time to get your site started, you'll need a lit
talent for selecting a domain name registrar, selecting and setting up yo
building your website. Web hosts are working hard to lower this barrier a
solutions for people.

Again, Facebook has lowered the barrier for people to create pages and
software to use, no extra files to upload, no geeky commands to type to
of course, go all out and develop your own custom applications to use on
isn't necessary and definitely isn't required.

The summary - Website: moderate skills; Facebook: basic skills

Money

While you might run across some very cheap domain registrars and hostin[...]
free ones. Domain registration and hosting costs are ongoing costs, so y[...]
you'll need to keep. You can find free solutions for creating and building[...]
need to find some talent to help get to be just what you want.

Domain registrations - $15/year

Basic shared hosting - $5/month

Total for the cheapest website - $75/year, ongoing

If you need to have a design created and any customized functionality, p[...]
$5000.

Facebook - free.

I'll let you do the rest of the math!

The 4 other areas discovery, Notification, Ease of Use, Moderation deserve
some attention, too.

For a standalone website, your new site will be discovered by search eng[...]
while, even when you do submit your site to be indexed. Knowledge of yo[...]
around the web as you spread the news about it and as those that do kno[...]
too. Rarely do I know if someone I know has visited a site before me, un[...]
it or have left a comment or post on the site. The very nature of Faceboo[...]
what pages my friends like and where they are posting comments, Becaus[...]
more people will discover your fan page before they know about your web[...]
Most websites are built to allow people to get notices when anything cha[...]
feeds provided by you. Using a feed reader, like Google Reader, they ca[...]
over the web without having to visit the sites. Your site may also have o[...]
members, through emails or text messages. A member of Facebook autom[...]
their friends' activities and by the pages they like. Signing up for notice[...]
RSS feeds to their readers requires a little more effort and tech saavy.

The question of ease of use I'll call a tie - while there are websites that[...]
some specialized software and require special skills, you wouldn't pick t[...]
use them. That said, you do have to pick the right tools for your site to b[...]

Finally, Moderation - if your site will have no user contributed comments or posts[...]
going to be an issue. However, if you do, someone will have to monitor s[...]
them. Not too big of a problem. But, a person can have only 1 identity on[...]
posts are not allowed. With only 1 identity, people tend to protect it and[...]
better, on Facebook. On your site, you don't have any way of connecting[...]
other sites, so it is a bit easier to post without consequences.

Wrap Up

You aren't the only facing these decisions - I face them in projects I wor[...]
and even Guy Kawasaki faces them.

All-in-all, Facebook has lowered the barrier to entry and made establishi[...]
church or ministry dead simple with no costs, unless you go into customi[...]
sooner, cheaper and with less technical skill than you can on a standalo[...]
you create a fan page?

Now, I wouldn't stop with a fan page - as time, money and talent allow, a[...]
Facebook is supported by advertisers, so visitors to your fan page will a[...]
control which ones. You will also be stuck with the way Facebook looks.[...]
Facebook, with your information tucked inside. A content management sy[...]
a domain name you control can give you the ability to totally build in so[...]
hard-pressed to do in Facebook at a reasonable price. Plus, on your own[...]

the other noise going on around you. Your site is dedicated to delivering
Facebook your message is squeezed between everyone else's.
If you haven't done either a fan page or a website, start with a fan page
If you have a website, get your fan page started and tie it to your websit