

Title: Finding Your Voice and Rising Above the Noise

Subtitle: Web Strategies

Second Subtitle: #0 Check the pulse of your website - is it alive?

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Summary: People are bombarded with information - radio, television, magazines, messages, email and social media updates. Despite all the noise, people want information. How do you get heard above the noise? Contribute to the noise and guarantee quality.

The biggest factor in getting heard is actually saying something on a regular basis but something of value - timely and relevant. I will bet you have something to share with people, but you haven't used your website to share it. Or, by the time you do, the timeliness or relevance was lost.

'We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit.'

Some time ago, I conducted a survey of church and sites and recorded a number of observations. Some were technical, but most related to the content and practices being used. Of the 36 sites included,

- 13 posted content that didn't mention any dates
- 5 had posted in the current week
- 8 had posted within the previous 2 - 4 weeks
- 5 had posted something in the past 1 - 3 months
- 2 had posted 3 - 6 months prior to the survey
- 1 had posted between 6 and 12 months prior
- 3 had not posted anything in over a year.

As an organization with events and news happening on a daily basis, keeping your website up-to-date with fresh content shouldn't be too difficult. Or, is it? It appears to be difficult!

Establishing a new routine and creating a new habit usually means breaking old habits. It involves a change in the way you think. The process needs to be an extension of a new way of doing something familiar, instead of a completely foreign act. Break it down - start by examining your current routine

- Who is involved in creating, gathering, editing and producing the piece?
- What are you publishing and updating?
- When are you publishing and updating?
- Where do you distribute your publications?
- Why do you duplicate effort to create any single piece?
- How many versions does a piece go through before the final publication?

of the document are in various email inboxes?

Next look at the content currently publishing.

How many times have you repeated yourself? Does a notice about an event appear in your announcements, in your newsletter and on your calendar? How often does the same content appear in the same format (multiple inserts in the weekly announcements, for example)?

Does the content have a limited shelf life?

What is the appeal of the content? Is it of interest to more than 80% of your audience? 80%? 20%?

How much content will have lasting value and can be used as a reference?

Find your rhythm Life has rhythm - you wake up, get ready, commute to work, more work, commute home, dinner, entertainment, sleep. Your community has rhythm. In fact, without rhythm, a community will slowly dissolve. Strengthen your community's rhythm, by echoing its pulse.

'What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.' - Ralph Waldo Emerson

With many sources of information, you need to decide and communicate with your audience - the "owner of record". That way, when things change, as they always do, you know which source to concentrate on. When you tally the cost to produce, the cost to maintain, and the cost to distribute, your website is the most logical and economical means to communicate. It is also the most accessible form you can produce and it can be the source of inspiration for you, too. **Why is your website the last thing to get updated?**

What message can people carry with them through the week? What did they miss at church? What services did they miss? What words of encouragement, challenges or prayer did they hear? Focus all your other publications on your website by making it the hub of your ministry and community. When you establish the habit of regular updates and guidance, your people will follow. Place for Updates, they establish their own habits. You give them the message and they share it. And, people will notice when the site is down - that's a good thing. Here's a challenge for you - spend the next 40 days looking at your publications online and offline. Check your pulse. Think about how those habits might need to change for the next. I'd love to hear what new habits you've added and which old ones you've let go. Let me know in the comments below.

Blessings!