

Title: Church Websites 101: Not Always Easy, But Should
Subtitle: Web Strategies

Author: Steve

Date: 2012/2/12

URL: <https://www.christianwebresources.net/modules/article/view/article.>

Keywords: strategy, content, planning, execution, discipline, websites 101

Summary: 3rd in a series [Church Websites 101: Easy, Not Simple](#). Last time, we fixed the easy stuff - now you'll need a little tech savvy to take care of some of the [selected a good CMS](#) of this will be easy. If you're having to edit the page directly - not so easy.

If you've gotten this far, you are well ahead of the majority of non-profit who overcome the hurdle of publishing online and have developed a discipline. Now you're getting into some of the finer details of effectively sharing content. Your choice of tools is helping or maybe it is limiting your efforts.

Content

All content should be browsable

PDFs are for printing.

A common practice when moving from the Gutenberg generation to Google is to republish your print materials online. It's simple - save your bulletin as a PDF, upload it to your website and you're done. People can download and read the bulletin 'online'. I still find bulletins that are formatted for printing - two-sided and folded - that don't read well on the screen. Multiple columns don't work well on the screen - read up to read your text. Plus, viewing a PDF on a mobile device is an entirely different experience. Work the other way around - format for online reading, then export materials from that.

Why isn't this easy? Because it's a shift in the way you think and old habits die hard.

Have unique page titles for every page

This is big. Really big. Huge, even.

"Why?", you ask.

Every page should have a clear purpose. The page title defines its purpose. The search engines use the page title in their results list. Good titles help.

This really isn't something you should have to think about, but it is something you should. Your content management system should be handling this for you, just check the settings out how you can make the most of your page titles. The first 60 - 70 characters are the most important, even fewer if your site is being viewed by mobile devices. What should be in your page title? The focus of the page and the source.

church). Spend some time crafting the titles for your pages.

Why isn't this easy? It isn't about selecting the title for your latest news update or posting. The page title we're focusing on is a behind-the-scenes title, which is in the title bar. If you're viewing the page source, look in the head section for the title. Most platforms will generate this for you based on a variety of elements you can control. Learning how this works and making the most of it.

Have a unique and relevant page description for every page (meta description)

This continues from the last point. Can you provide an executive summary of the page? The reasons for unique page titles also apply here -

Every page should have a clear purpose. The page title defines its purpose. The search engines use the page description in their results list. Good descriptions can lead to more visits.

While you will see the page titles (look at the top of your browser), you won't see the descriptions of the pages, unless you look under the hood. Right-click on any page and you'll see an option to 'View source'. Select it and you'll see what your browser has put into what you see. **meta name="description" content="page description"**. Usually, if the search engines find this description matches the page, it will be used in the search results list. If not, the search engines will use portions of the page.

Why isn't this easy? First, you need to clarify the purpose of every page. Second, you need to be able to summarize it, using 250 characters, or less. Third, you need to keep track of every page - your CMS may have a feature to do this, maybe it doesn't.

Images need text alternatives and titles

This is another item that usually isn't visible, unless you look deeper. The reason images have a text description is to move your mouse pointer over the image. A text description should appear as a tool tip near your pointer.

Why:

Your images should relate to your topic.

Search bots and screen readers (used by vision impaired visitors - which is a lot) read the text, not what's in the images.

How: The editor for your CMS should provide a way for you to add the alt text to your images. Look for fields labeled "Alternative Text" and "Advisory Title" or something similar. Fill them in and when you view the page, you should be able to see the images and see the text next to your pointer.

Why isn't this easy?

Primary focus is just adding a photo to a page to make methods for doing that, even with WYSIWYG editors, don't force you to do a prominent part of adding the image.

Images should have meaningful names

In this day and age of digital cameras, it's easy to get images to use on through the folders on your computer where you've saved your images, then the image, describe what is in the photo named DSC_1159.jpg. Or IMG_0 clues from the folder they're in, but until you look at the photo, you won't is true of search engines and screen readers.

Images communicate a lot - more than words alone can communicate. In fact, communicate emotions much more than words can. But, we use words to communicate search using words. Make sure your images have descriptive names before adding them to your website.

Why isn't this easy?

Isn't something that relies on your CMS, but may be a CMS. Your camera doesn't know your subject matter and gives each image set prefix with a sequential suffix (DSC_0079.jpg). Even if you rename a related to the subject, your CMS may rename the images when you upload.

Configuration

Faster page loads (especially important for mobile)

Speed is important, not just for mobile, but also for areas that are still using are not high speed. The increasing availability of broadband internet service places you've never reached before, but it is also conditioning us to be impatient. In general, what can you do? Text is, by far, the quickest to load. Images you are using the high resolution images straight from your 10 megapixel images are great for printing large images, but not for viewing online. You reduce the resolution of images for online viewing and you should. Few sites displaying the full resolution images, anyway, and it takes a lot more storage bandwidth to send those images and more time for your visitor to get them. get impatient and leave for another site.

There's a lot more to this than optimizing your images, but optimizing images you can do for yourself. Just save your images at lower resolutions. 72 dpi optimum setting for images displayed on a screen.

Other things you can do to improve your page speed is to reduce the number of image if it adds to the content. Every image or object on your page requires the server, which takes more time. Your server should be configured to optimize sending it. Your CMS theme or template should be designed by someone doing - poorly designed themes can increase the amount of time it takes to include anything you won't be using.

Here are a few places you can go to get some numbers for how fast your

<http://www.webpagetest.org/>

<http://code.google.com/speed/page-speed/>

<http://developer.yahoo.com/yslow/>

Why isn't this easy? The only thing you can directly impact is the number of images and the size of those images. Editing and optimizing an image for the web is a technical skill and you need to remember to do it. Also, there are many other things that can speed a page loads.

Links should look like links and nothing else should

The internet is as much about links as it is about content. Relationships are important. In your effort to have a unique style for your site, make sure the actions and other content need to be clearly distinguishable for your visitors. Cloaking links, not, will keep people from following them. What good are they then? Similarly, make sure no other text looks like a link - underlining text and blue text is usually a clue there is a link there. If that's not the case on your site, it's not good.

Why isn't this easy? As you don't allow a lot of formatting with your editor, (changing text color is something you definitely should disable, if possible) it's not easy.

'www' or not, your visitors should end up at the same place

www.yoursite.com and yoursite.com can actually be completely different sites. They should not be different sites, though. Make sure you can access your site using both. And, just as important, make sure the search engines know both forms of the same site. Select which form will be your primary address and have your server redirect the other form to the primary address. It is a simple adjustment, but does require some configuration and its configuration.

Why isn't this easy? It's a server configuration and your domain registrar may not do this, but often, you'll have to have someone do this manually.

If you are looking for a tool that will help you determine how well you are doing, you can visit <http://marketing.grandgeek.com/> for a report of several of these items for your site. Are you running into some difficulty getting all these accomplished? If you are, I am available.