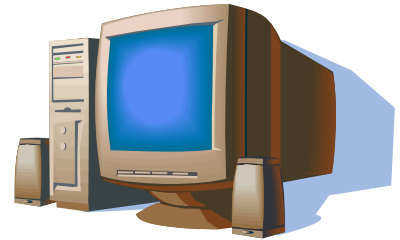


## Why Have A Website?

Just a few days ago, we sent out an appeal to the CARBC pastors to send in current information for the 2009 Directory. In that e-mail, we encouraged the churches to consider a website if they don't already have one. The question has been asked: Why? How will a website benefit my church? Our oldest son, Tylan (a layman active in his local church, 39-year-old father of six), has been traveling across the country for the past 10 months; finding a good church to attend has been a constant concern for them. He sent the following response:



"I was thinking about your plug to pastors to consider a web site. You couldn't be more right. I guarantee you that as a traveling band, our first choice has been to look at the field of churches in a new community through web sites. For example, I've been trying to evaluate what church we might go to tonight and none of the Baptist churches have a web site. Very frustrating. Here are a few thoughts to consider when a church creates a web site:

1. Don't do a dumpy one...it is the sure give away of a backwater church isolated from the world and community, though I'll give these credit for at least being in the game.
2. Know the character of your church and communicate it in your web site. You would be surprised at how much you can tell about a church by reading their web site. I can usually figure out the hot button preferential issues, the style of worship, the basic doctrinal position, whether the pastor is male or female, whether the church has any style, and whether the church is internally or externally focused. And, I want to be able to know these things before I choose to come. So, in a well-communicated way give me the answers to these questions.
3. Make sure the site is accurate. What a tragedy to miss a great service because the time was listed wrong; this has happened more than once.
4. Sell the church. Even if you are a backwater, aspire to be something more and use the web site as a way to start the self-fulfilling branding process that will begin to change the culture of your church. The web audience won't know if you are legit or not, which is ok, because they'll believe what they see and read and they'll decide to come. And, tell the church you are doing this, so that they know they have a couple of days to start getting their act together.
5. Use pictures--good and well-chosen pictures. Consider this: The great commission is the greatest sales and marketing initiative ever: it focuses on all of humanity, it focuses on absolute change in an individual's life, the effects of change last a lifetime and beyond, the product is free and will make the ultimate difference in someone's life, and you never have to worry about the manufacturer failing in an economic downturn - the guarantee is solid. "

Interestingly enough, our youngest son, Travis, the Young Adult Pastor at a large church near Charleston, SC, recently addressed the same subject on his website, and shared a thought provoking quote by Phil Cooke: *"It's not how we want to communicate with them. It's how they want to communicate with us. Why would we ignore an entire generation because we don't understand their chosen method of communication?"*

For our part, as the State Reps, we would not have to contact you each year for updated information if every church had a website with their basic information, preferably on the first page. The internet has truly become the way America communicates and the place people visit before committing themselves at any physical location. It's hard to comprehend why we wouldn't take advantage of it.