



On average website visitors will spend between [7 seconds](#) to [15 seconds](#) before deciding to dig deeper or leave your page. For individuals seeking a church these times may fluctuate slightly; yet, capturing the attention of someone exploring your church online is critically important. “Reducing your website’s friction can lead to more quality interactions without complications.” says Paul Andrew in his article [How to Reduce Friction in Web Design](#). Paul defines friction as “...anything that prevents your users from accomplishing their goals.” As a church leader you want visitors to engage in the story and message of your church. This is accomplished by designing elements that create interest and providing intuitive ways for visitors to explore your website. According to the [State of the Online Church](#) an ebook created in 2018 by Vanderbloemen and Jay Kranda states that “59% of the churches (of the 176 surveyed) have seen physical growth since launching their online ministry”. Therefore, future-minded church leaders must be willing to consistently examine their own website and consider ways to reduce friction and make a great first impression, that transition online visitors into in-person attendance. For the purposes of this article we will identify five common areas that cause the most friction.

### **Mobile Responsive**

Before addressing the potential friction “within” your website one must consider how visitors “view” your website when accessing it from a mobile device. “40.61 percent of web traffic in the United States originated from mobile devices” according to [Statista’s report](#) and [some](#) report “Mobile devices made up 42% of total time spent online.” with an ever-increasing percentage of mobile visitors coming to your website church leaders would be well-advised to have a mobile responsive website. A mobile responsive website interacts with the device the user is viewing the webpage from (mobile phone or tablet) and adjusts accordingly based on screen size. If visitors must pinch or use their fingers to shrink or expand your church website, chances are they will not stay long at all your website. One must carefully consider the different elements of their website and how mobile and desktop users engage with their content, especially navigation.

### **Navigation and Next Steps**

Visitors to your website want explore what your church offers and how they can get involved; therefore, creating clear paths for them to follow is the essentials to effective navigation and engagement. Remember, the story of Hansel and Gretel who left breadcrumbs to trace their path. Think of your website in much the same way by leaving digital “breadcrumbs” that draw website visitors to take action, so you can personally engage them one-on-one. Carey Nieuwhof in his article [5 Specific Ways the Current Approach to Church Seems Badly Outdated](#) says, “You know what the digital world is? It’s relationship...leaders who see the analog/digital life as seamless will be in much a better position to reach people who live like it’s seamless, because it is.” so when, creating navigation it is important to follow intuitive paths that allow visitors to engage with another person or at least reach out to one. First, we recommend creating a “I’m New Here” Section on your home page and commit an entire landing page to answer visitors common questions, extend a digital welcome, and encourage in person engagement. Secondly, staff pages should aim to be personal and provide ways for visitors to contact them directly via email or church phone number. Lastly, when someone attends your services and events they need to reflect the same care and concern verbalized on your website. Few things will turn off visitors more than being greeted online only to go unnoticed when attending your next service or event. For more information check out our article ...

### **Unclear Mission**

“Millennials are cause-oriented rather than institution-oriented. Telling historical information about your church will not inspire their generosity. However, showing the impact their giving made will connect them with a cause and generate their support.” said by Kristine Miller in [Engagement is Key to Millennial Support](#) and while website visitors differ in ages all want to know your church’s mission and how it is lived out in your church. Creating a clear and easy path for others to engage and serve to fulfill your mission will result in higher digital and in-person traffic. In [Simon Sinek’s iconic Ted Talk](#) he describes how successful leaders and companies focus on the “why” question and not just what they do. The church seeking to drive engagement must frame ministries and opportunities to serve within the context of the “why”. Meaning is not enough to just say on a website “We seek to know Christ and make Him known”, but rather show website visitors how that is done within your church. Changed lives is what attracts others to Christ not clever mission statements. Start by showing spiritual transformation through images videos, images, and testimonials. Then, invite others to participate with your church in being the change God wants for our world. Comb through your website to see how your text and images align and achieves your mission. Need help telling the story of your church check out ... a guest blog by our good friend Mark Wilson. Remember, the mission and it is what drives engagement and attendance, so make your mission clear on your entire website.

### **Remove the Clutter**

When it comes to removing clutter from your website, [Donald Miller best-selling author and founder of StoryBrand](#) offers some very practical cannot miss it advice, “If you confuse, you’ll lose” this advice applies to church and business websites alike. For the purposes of this paragraph we want to address common confusing steps churches make in their website design. One of the most common confusing messages we see at [MinistryCraft](#) are churches who leave out or provide incorrect information to a particular event. As a former youth minister, I know how hard it can be to keep up with an event calendar. Then, add in any specific details or registration, especially those requiring payment, the chances for confusion dramatically increase. Therefore, we encourage keep

## First Impressions Matter

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the fields to a minimum of need to know information and avoid annoying guests with calls to action that require multiple fields of data. Additionally, typos, outdated information, or broken links can convey laziness and/or unprofessionalism to visitors. Another mistake we commonly see on church websites is a desire to be artistic or clever turn into noise and disrupt the message of the church. Fonts, colors, and images can enhance or hinder user experience so try to choose common Google fonts, consistent complementary coloring schemes, and images that reinforce text content. Another thing to consider is more users want to scroll (especially mobile users) rather than clicking multiple times. Jakob Nielsen in [his 2008 study](#) said, "...website visitors only read 20-28% of the words on your website." so, when possible try to summarize and consolidate information. Speaking about closing it is about time to wrap this thing up.

In short, "Does your website work for you?" if you can answer yes, begin asking visitors if they visited your website before coming. If the answer is no, remember the four areas that make the biggest impressions to visitors.

- Mobile Responsive
- Intuitive Navigation and Interaction
- Clear Mission
- Limited Clutter

If you are unsure take the next 10 minutes and put yourself in the shoes of a church shopper who is looking for a new church. Examine everything through the lens of creating interest and driving engagement. Changes will need to be made and as with most every website change most of the discussion and change needs to happen offsite first before going live. Yes, there are challenges ahead, but as George Eliott said, "It is never too late to be what you might have been." so fight the urge to give up and keep your church website unchanged. As the old adage goes, "...you only have one chance to make a good first impression" is your website driving people away from your church or inviting them in to be part of your amazing church and life-giving message.

Additionally, MinistryCraft can perform a free audit of your website and come alongside you in improving your website. Visit our [Contact Us](#) page and in the comments mention your interest in a website audit. Then, someone from our Design Team will be in touch with you in the next two business days. May God bless you and your efforts to communicate the greatest message on your website.