



Connecting New England to Accelerate Evangelism

Eight Tips for Building Online Giving

From Nils Smith's talk at VNE's Large Church Pastors Forum
March 16, 2020

1. Cover the basics

- a. Always have a prominent DONATE button on email blasts
- b. Make sure the DONATE button is easy to find on your website ... color, size, placement
- c. Donors should be able to set up a one-time gift or a recurring gift
- d. Make evaluating/improving your online giving experience a quarterly habit
- e. Make sure your giving page is just as easy to use on a cell phone as on a laptop

2. Get a good online giving platform

- a. Find the right platform: "I would pay more for a better experience all day".
- b. Recommended Platforms
 - i. [Tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly) - can be up and taking gifts in 10 minutes
 - ii. [Pushpay](https://pushpay.com) - little more robust but not materially

3. Do these things on your giving page

- a. In some churches, the abandon rate (before completing the donation) is as high as 30% because of the quality of the giving experience, so a good experience is needed and pays for itself.
- b. So make it simple: Learn by giving \$5 to 10 other ministries to see what they do and give to yours to compare it. Pay attention to how simple it is, how long it takes, and how inspiring they make it ... ideally it should be "one-click" but not more than two.
- c. Reduce friction: Making it simple is more important than getting lots of details from them.
- d. Have "make a recurring gift" as visible/central as possible
- e. Have 3-4 pre-selected gift options AND an option to write in a customized amount.
- f. Have a single call to action - give to the general fund vs. having lots of giving options, or other sign-ups that aren't related to donations
- g. Use compelling background images aligned with mission ... depict the change they are investing in
- h. To help them stay focused on completing their donation, don't offer a blatant navigation link back to your home page. Best is to have your logo on the page and embed a link to your home page behind that.



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- i. Address anxiety by including a link to your privacy policy on your donation page.
- j. If you are ECFA certified, display the emblem on your page.

4. Build a great acknowledgement page

- a. A personalized thank you: set up the system to use their first name
- b. Use a background graphic that gives a visual of the impact of the donation.
- c. Provide opportunities on THIS page for them to take a next step: “What next?” Sign up to volunteer, join a small group, etc.

5. Push for online giving during live-streamed services

- a. Give two invitations to give in each service: one just before the pastor’s sermon that motivates them to give -- that’s when participants are going to be most attentive - with a quick reminder where to give at the end.
- b. Make it simple by pointing them to the church’s website to give.

6. Focus on developing a mobile-responsive website instead of a church app

- a. People are typically using no more than six apps regularly ... build a good web site and you don’t need a mobile site that requires a lot of money and work without much value.
- b. The idea that “if we build an app, they will use it” is no longer true.

7. Invest in a quality church database as giving infrastructure

- a. Recommended platforms
 - i. Church Community Builder
 - ii. Rock
 - iii. Planning Center
- b. Your database is like the foundation of a house
 - i. You don’t want to replace your house’s foundation every two years
 - ii. Church database should be thought of as a 10-year commitment, so do your homework
 - iii. Giving platforms are starting to integrate with database systems
 1. Tithe.ly
 2. Church Community Builder with PushPay
 3. Planning Center
 4. Blackbaud



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8. Get good at capturing emails for potential future giving

- a. Your website should have a visible opportunity to sign up for something valuable **to the user** - updates from the church, submit a prayer request, etc. - this is the best way to capture emails.
- b. Make sure your privacy policy is easy to find.
- c. Ask for minimal/least sensitive information at this stage: first and last name, email. Can get more info later as they choose to get more involved with the church.
- d. Once they sign up, make sure the confirmation page reinforces what they just signed up for/can expect, and use background graphics that connect with your mission to reinforce the value.
- e. Consider putting the email-capturing form right on the webpage, rather than having to click into it.