

Religious congregational website



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Diminished interest in religious social involvement is a common dilemma that many congregations are facing. The interest in increasing youth involvement is not only to ensure the social development of the organization but is also in response to the need to mentor, protect and nourish their journey to adulthood. The youth are among the most vulnerable members of society but they also have the greatest potential. Another key trend today is the popularity, if not prevalence of online social networking. In combining these two key developments, the potential of creating a positive impact in increasing youth involvement (Peck et al, 2008).

Developing a social networking website for young member of the congregation to develop interest and increase participation requires insights about the target population. The development of such information is critical if the website is to be one that is stay accessible, sustainable and responsive long-term. These consideration hold true though congregations are usually limited geographically: Granqvist and Hagekull (2000) point out that a number of the juvenile respondents of their research expressed their sense of isolation is oftentimes most highlighted by their local community interactions. The implication of the study is that geographical proximity does not ensure a sense of inclusion to social institutions. In a similar study, Oman and associates revealed that one of the primary deterrents from young populations to accessing help and support services is their perception that they will gain notoriety or that their privacy will be compromised (Cooley-Strickland et al, 2009). In all these cases, what is being highlighted is the importance of self-image and social inclusion.

The site that is to be developed should consider these factors very closely. Like any other social networking platform, user interfaces should allow for

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personalization, socialization and self-expression (Thorn, 2009). As the target population has a generally high level of technological competency, accessibility of user interfaces is not a major concern which creates flexibility in content. Efforts to increase awareness for youth activities in the congregation should be seamlessly incorporated into the user interface which should include updates of congregation activities, opportunities for involvement as well as more general feeds to accommodate a more general audience. Users should be encouraged to determine their mode and pace of involvement. Ultimately, the development of an online platform for socialization and communication among youth members of the congregation should be a foundation for more intense involvement in the congregation activities.

References

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