Technology and the Church
Two Ways to Let Your Light Shine
by Loren Bordeaux

The blinding pace of new technologies introduced every year can challenge even the brightest and best of us. It can also overwhelm and discourage local churches. Where does a local congregation focus their vision, their effort, or their dollars in trying to stay current with technology? How do they effectively reach an increasingly mobile membership when budgets are so tight? And how can technology support the main mission—that of keeping the message of Jesus Christ front and center?

One thing is certain: If we don’t do our best with the basics it’s likely a waste of time and money to pursue more cutting-edge opportunities. We should strive to be well above average in two key areas of church ministry: audio/visual presentation and the church Web site.

Why? Because our churches should be a transparent window in representing a God of order and excellence, as well as the Lord of creativity.

Audio Visual Excellence

Most members benefit from high-level technology throughout the week, at work, home, and even in their cars. Poor quality and lowered expectations at church are an embarrassment for us all—and a turn-off for visitors.

REALITY CHECK #1: If your church’s equipment is more than a decade old, it’s time to consider an upgrade. The devil knows poor production quality is a distraction to the intended message. That’s why so much effort is lavished on public media productions that have nothing to do with Christ. Satan wants to make it as easy as possible to choose his way. We should care as much about making it easy for people to learn about God and making a decision to follow Him.
But it takes more than good quality sound equipment. Our churches need attentive, trained audio volunteers committed to high production values—so God’s presence and message come through clearly without distraction.

“Many small churches seem to believe that new tools for ministry are outside of their budget range or may not be significant for a church of their size. It may be, though, that such thinking contributes to the continued small size of some of those churches.” George Barna

REALITY CHECK #2: If your church’s data projector is more than six years old, it’s time to replace it. More than 50 percent of your community’s households now have one or more high definition television sets.1 How can we spend money on bright new visual screens at home and tolerate dim, dark images at church? We can do better at lifting Jesus up each Sabbath in bright, clear graphics.

There have been significant improvements in data projector technology during the last six years, especially in size, brightness, and resolution. When pondering a new projector for your church, consider one that is able to accommodate a 16:9/10 image ratio. And, because technology moves so quickly, purchase one that’s as bright as you can afford. It won’t become obsolete so quickly.

REALITY CHECK #3: Has your platform or house lighting ever been updated? You might not think of this as “technology,” but a key element to helping your church members and visitors focus on the spirit of worship is lighting—both for what happens on stage and in the congregation. Compare how you feel when you visit a church with a dark and dim platform to how you feel when you visit one that is bright. How does either affect your participation in the service?

An Up-to-date Web Site

Some time ago I was alone over a weekend when my family was away so I thought it would be interesting to visit another church. I Googled “churches in the Northwest.” What I found was disappointing. Some churches had the address and directions to their location but no service times listed. Others looked like they hadn’t been updated in months or years.

To be effective, Web technologies must be relevant and timely. Otherwise your church is shouting to the world: “Hey, we’re boring and out of date! And we really don’t like visitors!” Your church’s Web site may be the first impression you give to a potential visitor. An active, updated Web site may help ensure their first visit isn’t their last.

Adventist churches have two inexpensive services to help them initiate a Web site: AdventistChurchConnect, run by the North American Division through AdventSource, and netAdventist, managed through the General Conference. Some churches, however, have apparently decided that once they set up their basic site with one of these programs, they don’t need to do anything more.

Hire a graphic designer to help create a professional and pleasing look. Get feedback from church members and strangers on what would make it better. Include content that helps your Web site visitors get to know your church and why you meet each week. Make it quick and easy to get to the best parts, like what and when things are happening, how to contact key leaders, and audio or video recordings from past services or events.

These recommendations are not about spending money on frills. New technologies are to our society today what the printing press was to earlier generations. Can we imagine being silent while the world moves on without God’s message?

It’s about staying true to the basics, in the best and brightest way, for Him!

Loren Bordeaux
North Pacific Union Conference technology director

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I’m a Member, Right?

The difference between convention registration and society membership

By Kimberly Luste Maran, SAC general vice-president

Click, click, scroll, click … .
Done. You’ve just signed up for the Society of Adventist Communicator’s annual convention. You book your airfare, your hotel. You are looking forward to networking, attending workshops, taking a media tour, and reconnecting with friends and colleagues. You’re glad to be a member of this faith-based, diverse professional society.

But wait! Registering for the convention doesn’t make you a full-fledge member. To join, and access our “Members Only” material, fill out our membership application (available online at www.adventistcommunicator.org), and pay the annual membership dues. Here’s a listing of those fees:

- Individual membership $25 per year
- Institutional membership $50 per year (Includes access to benefits for up to three employees, $10 more per year per additional employee from the same institution.)
- Student membership $10 per year

“With all of the exciting things SAC has to offer, who wouldn’t want to be a member?” asks Brian Weed, board member and Web/social media special interest group representative.

While the annual convention is the highlight of SAC, anyone who isn’t a member is missing out on what SAC offers beyond the conference. “Members have the opportunity to network with fellow professionals through our online directory,” says George Johnson, executive director of SAC. “They don’t have to wait for a convention to connect with someone who may be attending.”

“Members can network with each other via Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as through the brand new mentoring program,” added Weed. Audio recordings of recent conventions are also available online to registered members. And as a member of SAC, you’ll have access to our job bank and be able to post your resume—and possibly land your dream job. From the online membership directory to media credentialing to the online learning center, you’ll find lots of helpful resources.

SAC is looking to enhance the membership experience by adding downloadable/printable membership cards, and other exciting new features (story to follow in a later issue of PC). This and more will be available with a paid membership.

Go to www.adventistcommunicator.org if you aren’t already a member, and click on “Members Only” to sign up. Once you’ve joined, you can immediately start enjoying the rewards of membership. And . . . if you haven’t already, sign up for this year’s convention in October, in the Chicagoland area! We’ve got some great speakers and workshops lined up!

Integrated Communication
The Hub of Excellence
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS • OCTOBER 20-22, 2011
Hello Fellow Communicators,

Plans are continuing to fall into place for the Society of Adventist Communicators convention in Lombard (Chicago), Illinois. Please set aside October 20-22 to attend this convention where we will explore “Integrated Communication: The Hub of Excellence.”

Our featured speakers include David Neff, Christianity Today editor-in-chief, John Bradshaw, It Is Written speaker/director, and a host of presenters on cutting edge communication.

Early bird online registration with special rates will begin soon, so register early to save $50 for your organization.

Also, as we prepare for our convention in October, we are accepting applications for the 2011 SAC awards. You may enter your own work or nominate someone else to receive an award. This year, the board has decided to expand the categories. Students and professionals can enter work for more than 30 awards in corporate communication, new media, print, broadcast, graphic design and marketing/public relations. Out of all these winners, we will also choose the overall Award of Excellence and the Reger Cutting Smith Award for innovation and creativity. We also need nominations for our Lifetime Achievement, Student and Young Professional awards.

Please visit our Web site www.adventistcommunicator.org to review all the award categories and judging criteria. Then, look through your magazines, books, articles, constituency work, public relations campaigns, websites, videos and other projects and enter your work for award consideration. The judging panel will include Adventist and non-member communication professionals from various fields who are familiar with church mission and focus.

We are excited about this convention and look forward to seeing you in October.

Sincerely,

Steve Vistaunet
SAC president

SAC Launches Mentoring Program

Everyone can use a little professional advice and coaching. It doesn't matter whether you have worked in a particular field for 30 years, three years, or three weeks. The wisdom of experience can help many avoid pitfalls and achieve professional success. That is why the Society of Adventist Communicators is launching a mentoring program (SACMP) for students who are planning on a career in Communication.

SACMP is an opportunity to provide Christian leadership to young professionals to be better prepared for a future in communication. Some benefits of the program for mentees are:

- Establish a practical understanding of the communication field of interest to you
- Create communication contacts to utilize for future job placement

Beginning this year with the fall session, applications must be received by July 1.

Mentee Application Requirements:
- Must be a college junior or senior
- Completed SACMP application
- Resume
- Official College Transcript
- Three Statements of Support (One must be from department chair)
- Outline of Goals (5 Year Plan)
- Photo (Saved as a jpg)

Visit www.adventistcommunicator.org for application forms for both mentees and mentors and to learn more about the program.