6 *Mistakes* CHURCHES MAKE *with* ONLINE GIVING

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Although the option has been around for years, most parishes have yet to jump on the online giving bandwagon, and there are a number of reasons why. Limited time to set up, not enough people available to help the parish promote, a fear that no one will select the option and thus time will be wasted — the list goes on. Even so, more than 50% of churches now offer online programs, up from 11% in 2011. By offering this giving option to your faith community, there is potential for your parish donations to increase by 30%.

Unfortunately, a lot of parishes have trouble getting online giving off the ground. After a church makes that initial announcement of the program, they don't see any additional increase.

Here are six common mistakes churches make with online giving and how to fix them.

MISTAKE #1:
SETTING IT AND FORGETTING IT

Many churches adopt a "set it and forget it" attitude with their online giving program. They set up their collections, write compelling descriptions, and even place a Donate button on their website. Now, building your program is important, but so is promoting it.

Ask Father to speak about online giving during Mass once a month or quarterly, publish articles in the bulletin about the ease of online giving, and insert a flyer into new member packets sharing how people can give. If your online giving tool allows parishioners to sign up quickly on a tablet or laptop, consider having volunteers walk them through it after Mass.

Parishioners are in your pews because they believe in the work your church is doing, so let them know every way they can support you.

MISTAKE #2:
CHOOSING THE EASIEST OVER THE BEST

Many churches initially choose to use a program like PayPal for online donations because it's easy to set up, and it's a familiar name. But if your goal is to actually increase overall giving, you need more than a transaction form.

More robust online giving programs such as WeShare offer better reporting, allow you to set up second special collections and events, and have dedicated account managers to answer questions from your

church staff and your parishioners. Some programs even offer free marketing tools, making sure that Mistake #1 never happens at your parish.

All of these elements save your staff countless hours and headaches every year, more than paying for the slight increase in fees you may incur. Add in the bump in donations you'll see from more regular giving and extra collections, and you can see a big increase in your collection totals.

MISTAKE #3:
FORGETTING ABOUT EVENTS

Some programs only allow for one style of giving, but there are several online giving programs that will allow for event management. Though some churches will add their Sunday offertory collection and maybe a few special collections individually, some will forget about the event management side to online giving. It is important to take advantage of all opportunities your online giving program provides.

Online giving can be used for every single collection, event, ministry, and religious program the church offers. Promote all your collections and events. Ask church leaders, program directors, and staff to help you list their collections or events on your website so parishioners have a single place to give, register, and sign up for events. Use your online giving tool to help sell tickets, register kids for religious education, increase attendance at RCIA, and more.

MISTAKE #4:
WHERE IS THE DONATE BUTTON?

A lot of churches make the mistake of hiding the Donate button at the bottom of the page or two to three clicks in from the home page. Make sure to move the Donate button to your menu bar or at the top of your website page.

The location of the button must be easily visible from the home page of your website so that everyone looking to support your parish can find it in seconds. Once they click that button, they should be able to easily give in minutes rather than having to jump through hoops by creating an account, filling out forms, or reading through multiple web pages before even getting to the giving page. Making the process as easy as possible is key to getting donations.

MISTAKE #5:
MAKING DONORS ALWAYS CREATE AN ACCOUNT

Most online giving programs will have an account creation process to follow, but it should allow for one-time donations without an account.

Your visitors and parishioners who are in a hurry, or don't want to create an account, will appreciate the flexibility. This will make it as easy as possible for anyone to donate.

MISTAKE #6:
SAYING, "ONLINE GIVING IS NOT FOR MY CHURCH"

A lot of churches make excuses for why online giving simply wouldn't work at their parish. The most common one given is, "We have a lot of older parishioners and they will never use it."

The truth is that older parishioners do give online. In 2014, 59% of donors over the age of 66 gave a gift online, and that number will continue to rise. Providing those donors with a simple online giving solution — and giving opportunities for church staff to help walk them through the donation process — can make your program a success, no matter the makeup of your church.

And if you still have some hardcore parishioners who just really want to write the check, drop in the envelope, or search through their pockets for dollars, no worries! All kinds of giving are welcome.

BECAUSE BUILDING A VIBRANT CHURCH MATTERS

WeShare is our easy-to-use online giving program, designed to help you exceed your parish financial goals. Learn more by visiting www.WeShareGiving.com or call 877.316.0260.