

**Executive Summary**

Many churches rely heavily on developing their membership bases so that they provide a solid foundation of support for general operating expenses and funds to help deliver on their missions. But developing and nurturing memberships can be a labor-intensive and time-consuming undertaking — from building relationships and demonstrating stewardship to overseeing staff operations — it all comes back to effective management. That’s where technology can help.

# How Technology Can Help Your Church

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At a time when churches are facing increased scrutiny and a heightened demand for stewardship reporting, technology can help your church maintain a high level of accountability.

Technology has the potential to improve every aspect of your church operations. With limited resources – time and money alike – you should use technology strategically and where it will have the most impact. Although the challenges may be numerous, there are a few key areas in which technology can really make a difference:

**Building relationships**

Technology can help you strengthen relationships with your members. By communicating on a personal level, you can further engage your members and keep them connected to your church.

**Making better decisions**

Technology supports planning and decision-making by allowing you to maintain a single, up-to-date, and real-time view of your members and finances. It can provide the information you need to strategically plan for your church’s growth.

**Managing your finances**

At a time when churches are facing increased scrutiny and a heightened demand for stewardship reporting, technology can help your church maintain a high level of accountability. It can also help your church efficiently manage budgets and spending, and it can help you access reports that enable informed decision-making.

**Managing your operations**

Increasing the efficiency of service delivery; optimizing your volunteers, memberships, and sponsorships; and improving your internal processes are all areas in which technology can and will make a huge difference for your church.

Let’s take a more detailed look at the impact these areas can have on the health and future prosperity of your church. At a minimum, your technology solution should help you in these areas:

1. **Single, holistic view of members**
2. **Relationship management**
3. **Accountability and stewardship**
4. **Engaging members online**
5. **Analysis reporting**
6. **Direct mail**
7. **Saving time**

## A Closer Look: The Top Ways Technology Can Help Churches

As churches are increasingly scrutinized, your ability to ensure that designated funds are managed correctly is critically important.

### 1. **Single, holistic view of members**

How many different ways can members interact with your church? It's very likely that various interactions fall into more than one category. It is vital for staff and volunteers at your church to be able to see a holistic view of your members. The proper technology will allow you to carefully manage all the day-to-day details and interactions with your members. An integrated financial, membership, and website management solution will allow you to easily view many types of information in one place, rather than in disparate applications.

### 2. **Relationship management**

Long-term support is achieved from engaging your members and cultivating and managing relationships. An effective member management system is more than just a technology — it is an enterprise-wide approach to managing information and enriching relationships. Technology can help you with everything from tracking valuable biographical information to ensuring that each member receives personalized treatment.

### 3. **Accountability and stewardship**

There's no hotter topic in the church community than accountability. As churches are increasingly scrutinized, your ability to ensure that designated funds are managed correctly is critically important. Being able to easily share information between your financial and member management systems and then present it to members and stakeholders will help you demonstrate the impact of all funds that you receive. Your technology solution should allow you to share timely, accurate information, and provide a high level of stewardship.

### 4. **Engaging members online**

Building and fostering relationships with members can be difficult when your church has a small staff and a large congregation. It is nearly impossible to create a meaningful, personalized experience for each person. By creating an online community for your congregation, you can keep your members connected. Your website is an extension of your organization, so it should convey the same image and level of attention that you give members in person. A good technology solution can tightly integrate your website with data from your member management system; you can greet each member by name, target messages for upcoming events, and share news about groups or programs that a member is involved in right on your home page. Members can also update their profiles so information is always up-to-date.

## about Blackbaud

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### **5. Analysis reporting**

What makes your church successful? Which areas can be improved? Capturing and accessing the information you need to demonstrate the effectiveness of your church is critical. You will enter a lot of important information into your database, and getting it back out should be a breeze. The right reports can help you take a flood of data and turn it into insight and action. Beyond the right reports, technology can also ensure that "real time" reports are effectively published online.

### **6. Direct mail**

Add up all the invitations, newsletters, receipts, and thank-you letters that your church is sending out every year. Chances are, the sum will amount to a whole lot of mail, time, and postage.

Managing your mailings doesn't have to be as challenging, costly, and time-consuming if your technology solution allows you to automate the process. And with applications such as National Change of Address (NCOA) updates, address validation, and duplicate removal, you can be on your way to using your time and money as efficiently as possible. An integrated solution also allows you to enter member information in one place, which minimizes the likelihood of errors and saves time.

### **7. Saving time**

As a nonprofit, everyone at your church must be committed to working in the most effective manner possible. The efficient use of time, money, and staff allows you to better deliver on your mission. Take a look at the technology solution you are using. Can you automate repetitive tasks? Can you access frequent operations from one place? Are you able to integrate with other frequently used applications, such as word processing, spreadsheets, email, and calendars? Do you have fast access to the reports and information you need on a daily basis to make strategic decisions?

## Conclusion

The previous sections of this paper describe ways that technology can help your organization boost your membership program. But none of them really makes a difference if it takes an eternity to make them happen. Technology should improve your daily processes and drive efficiency within your organization. Everyone at your organization must be committed to working in the most effective manner possible. The efficient use of time, money, and staff allows you to better deliver on your mission.

Technology is an investment that can help ensure your nonprofit is operating efficiently. Clearly, success requires more than technology, but if your technology doesn't allow for process automation and easy management of data, you can expect more work in the long run. In the end, the most important thing technology can do for you is to help your staff, processes, and the people you serve all work together seamlessly, providing the best experience for everyone involved.