

Branding & Marketing

Principles for Church Planters

It's Not Marketing. It's Ministry.

Why This Matters

Branding and marketing can feel uncomfortable for pastors and church planters. It can feel self-promotional, distracting, or even unspiritual.

But when done well, branding and marketing are not about attention.

They are about **clarity**.

Clear churches remove unnecessary barriers so people can:

- Find you
- Trust you
- Engage your community
- Encounter the gospel

The goal is not attendance. The goal is life transformation.

Core Mindset

Marketing is not manipulation. Marketing is hospitality.

It is the way you communicate, before someone ever walks in the door:

- Who you are
- Why you exist
- What they can expect
- How they can take a next step

Principle 1: Your Brand Is Perception

Your brand is not what you say it is. Your brand is what people believe it is.

A brand is simply a person's perception of your church.



Ask this question often:

What do we want people to believe when they think of our church?

Healthy church brands point people toward:

- Mission over personality
- Purpose over programs
- Disciple-making over preferences

Excellence does not win people to Christ, but unnecessary sloppiness can keep them away.

Principle 2: Your Digital Location Matters

People visit your church online before they visit in person.

Your digital presence often determines whether someone ever takes the risk of attending.

A Helpful Mental Model

- Search engines are the highways
- Your ranking is your location
- Your website is the hub
- Social media is the front porch
- Photos are the windows

If people cannot find you, understand you, or trust you online, they likely will not visit in person.

Principle 3: Search Visibility Builds Trust

When people search for a church in your community:

- Do you show up?
- Do you show up clearly?
- Do you show up early enough to be seen?

Basic best practices:

- Maintain consistent listings across platforms
- Keep meeting times and locations accurate



- Use a Google business profile
- Encourage healthy, authentic reviews

Visibility does not equal ego. Visibility enables ministry.

Principle 4: Your Website Is Your Hub

Your website is not for insiders. It is for people asking, "Is this church for me?"

Your website should:

- Be clear, not clever
- Be simple, not crowded
- Be welcoming, not insider-focused

Essential Website Elements

- Location and service times that are easy to find
- A clear "New Here" experience
- Information about kids and safety
- A simple next step
- Mobile-friendly design

Think of your website like a staff member. If it had a job description, would it be effective?

Principle 5: Social Media Is the Front Porch

Social media is where people peek before they enter.

Healthy church social media:

- Shows people, not just graphics
- Highlights real life, not just announcements
- Communicates warmth, not performance

Better to do one or two platforms well than many poorly.

Principle 6: Photos Create Trust

Photos are emotional shortcuts to trust.



Churches with no photos feel distant. Churches with only graphics feel impersonal.

Your goal is not perfection. Your goal is presence.

Priority Photo Categories

- Welcome moments
- Families and relationships
- Worship and gathering
- Groups and community
- Kids (with permission)
- Leadership and teaching
- Spaces filled with people

You do not have to wait until launch day to capture these moments.

Principle 7: Reviews Are Social Proof

People trust what others affirm.

Reviews function like cars in a parking lot:

- A full lot signals health
- An empty lot raises questions

Encourage reviews naturally and consistently. Focus primarily on platforms people already use.

Trust is often transferred before it is earned in person.

Principle 8: Systems Beat Spot Efforts

Random posts and one-off efforts rarely produce fruit. Healthy churches build systems, not spot solutions.

From first interaction to belonging, people need:

- Clear pathways
- Consistent follow-up
- Relational touchpoints

Avoid "spot watering." Build sustainable rhythms.



Trusted Starting Resources

If you need help building systems or sharpening clarity, these partners are a strong place to begin:

- Church Fuel
- ChurchCandy
- TheChurchCo

Nexus has also hosted training with Chris Abbott, and those sessions are available on the Nexus YouTube channel.

Final Reminder

Branding and marketing are not about growing a platform.

They are about stewarding clarity so people can:

- Feel safe taking a step
- Know what to expect
- Encounter Jesus through your community

It's not marketing. It's ministry.

