

Socially-Driven ChMS Gives Churches the Ability to Encourage, Empower, and Engage

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If you've read last month's CCMAG article, [The Future of Church Management Software, by Steve Hewitt](#), you know that the landscape is changing for churches. Software companies are either playing catch up or are already ahead of the game in providing new technology advancements to help them meet their communication goals. Steve noted that the three biggest changes in the ChMS (or CMS is you prefer) industry are: 1) Mobile Computing 2) Social Networking and 3) Cloud (or web-based) Computing. So how does the solution you currently use match up?

I often interview church staff about their use of management software and other internet technologies and find that many pastors and administrators greatly desire to connect with their congregation and stay more on top of their needs, while not feeling like technology overwhelms their day-to-day lives. If technology becomes a hindrance instead of a help, or if it gets in the way of ministry instead of aiding it, then the technology probably isn't working for you!

Over the past few months I've had the pleasure of serving on my own church's technology committee and going through the process of reviewing other ChMS providers. As we reviewed solutions, viewed online demos, and talked with sales staff, one solution continued to rise to the top: [Church Community Builder \(CCB\)](#)

Though I write articles (such as this one) for CCB about their solutions, I've also worked with other church management software providers over the last decade and talked with countless churches about the solutions they use. As I sat on my own church's tech

committee and listened to our church administrator share her findings after poring over the details from online info and phone conversations with other ChMS providers, CCB continued to surface as the best possible solution for our church.

Our senior pastor commented that CCB seems to be always looking to improve and willing to go the extra mile to enhance their solutions. As technology and people's lives change, so do the tools we use to "do church". This means that the computerized church management software solutions that worked ten, twenty, or even thirty years ago (when they were first introduced) are not going to work as well today.

People today expect their church to have a viable website that is more than a mere yellow page ad; they need a portal to connect with their church leaders and fellow members. People also communicate in ways that involve more technology and this must be paralleled through the technology solutions a church embraces.

As these communication and connection tools evolve, CCB continues to evaluate and build in en-

hancements to meet the ever-growing needs of their users: church plants to mega churches; single campus to multi-campus churches; churches with as few as 50 attenders to churches with over 10,000 attenders.

CCB has stayed ahead of the curve by focusing on three vital areas that our friend, Steve Hewitt, predicts are the future of the church management software industry.

Mobile Computing

In a world where mobile computing is used as much or more than personal computers, it is critical that your church database be securely accessible from a variety of mobile devices. CCB provides unique interfaces for PDA's, web-enabled cell phones and the immensely popular iPhone. Church staff and members with appropriate security privileges can quickly find phone numbers, email addresses and physical locations of individuals in their database. They can instantly initiate calls, send emails, and even access maps and obtain driving directions (with some devices). With the correct privileges, Pastors and Staff can also edit member profiles, allowing them to quickly correct critical profile information on the fly. CCB's mobile capabilities equip pastors, leaders, and volunteers to better know and serve those in their care, even when away from the church office.

Social Networking

The key to a healthy church is community, which is created as people develop relationships by connecting and communicating with each other. In CCB's socially-driven approach to church management, Group Management is a major cornerstone, and it goes way beyond a means of organizing names in a database.

Every church community, regardless of its size, can be broken down into smaller groups of people who need to interact with one another in some fashion. Whether these Groups are comprised of church staff, elders, small group participants, Sunday School teachers, volunteers, or Bible study members, the possibilities are endless. So are the number of groups that CCB allows you to create. Each Group has its own Calendar, Discussion Board, Needs Management, Positions, and File Sharing benefits. Group Leaders can quickly commu-

“ CCB is church management software that works for me. It's *web-based*, they take care of all the updates and backups, it's *secure* and has an API. Now I can focus on our internal network. ”

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nicate with their Group Participants and Group Participants can easily interact with one another. By providing both data management and private community tools in a tightly integrated bundle, CCB offers churches a more robust view of overall church involvement.

Web-Based (Cloud) Computing

In the past, ChMS software was purchased, shipped, installed, and regularly updated through floppy discs and CDs sent to churches via snail mail. These days, web-based offerings are easily and instantly accessed through the Internet with little drain on the personal computer. No more waiting for updates to arrive in the mail—and no more headaches for your IT staff. Better yet, web-based ChMS allows church staff and even members to access appropriate information from any location with an Internet connection.

“The ubiquitous nature of today's Internet has created a fundamental shift in the way church staffs interact with their members, and the way members interact with their pastors and fellow congregants. This has forced ChMS providers to develop solutions that help meet these new demands. CCB was birthed in 1999 and was one of the first completely web-based church management software solutions. Today we continue to support churches and look toward the future as cloud

computing evolves,” says Steve Caton, vice president of sales and marketing for CCB.

Web-based technologies such as email, websites, blogs, instant messaging, and social networking have all motivated ChMS providers to improve their offerings in order to: 1) meet the traditional data management needs of the church office and 2) help improve communication and build greater community in today’s “wired” culture.

Now that you see how CCB addresses these crucial aspects related to the future of church management, I’d like to share with you some of the recent enhancements that CCB has added over the past six months.

Communication Enhancements

Customizable Email Notifications: Since many people use multiple social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, it’s challenging to remember when and where to go in order to gain the latest information and receive timely communication. Like many social networking sites, CCB offers every user the option of activating email notifications of activity and action items relevant to them. When new events are scheduled, new comments are posted on Group Discussion Boards, new files are uploaded, or any number of other activities occur, CCB users can be notified via email according to their own personal preferences. This adds an entirely new level of communication and convenience, eliminating the frustration of missing time-sensitive communications and making the community-building process more proactive.

Needs Management: Every church community has a variety of needs that can be met: a single mom may need car repairs or a family may need meals after the birth of a child. CCB’s Needs Management tools allow for the creation of a high-level “Need” with multiple tasks or action items within it. Each Need can then be communicated throughout the church or within a specific group of people, allowing them to respond by accepting responsibility for one or more items within each Need. Those who organize the Need are then notified as each item is accepted; enabling them to inform people that assistance is on its way. For a complete list of communication enhancements: “<http://www.churchcommunitybuilder.com/buzz/in-the-news/mychurch-events-com>”

Deluxe Version Enhancements

Over the past year, CCB has been working on adding even more robust features to their premier ChMS solution, CCB Deluxe (which replaces the Standard Plus version). Deluxe now supports tiered hierarchy (Direc-

tors, Coaches and Leaders) within Groups Management, private notation capabilities, event summaries, historical group involvement, check-in enhancements and event reminders that prompt leaders to record attendance and post their event summaries.

“Our Deluxe version adds new enhancements aimed directly at organizations that need to manage and communicate with groups of people in a hierarchical structure,” says Caton. “Furthermore, with the addition of historical involvement information, church leaders will now be a mouse click away from vital intelligence about an individuals’ path to connectedness within the church.” For a full list of features available in the new Deluxe version, HYPERLINK “<http://www.churchcommunitybuilder.com/buzz/in-the-news/churchcommunitybuilder-ccb-releases-new-deluxe-version-for-expanded-web-based-church-management>”

New features within the Deluxe version can help church leadership manage group activity information in ways that are more organized and easier to analyze. While Deluxe is CCB’s most comprehensive product offering, they also offer two other solution plans, Standard and Essential. Visit “<http://www.churchcommunitybuilder.com/solutions>” to find out which solution is best for your church.

“To view a new 8 minute video from CCB on “Empowering a Sense of Belonging” please join their Facebook Fan page and view the video here (<http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=557523307207>)



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