

# Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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## Manage Your Church's Brand

All public entities have a *brand* or *image*. Or, to say it differently, every organization has an identifying mark or marks that cause it to stand apart from other similar organizations. This is true of churches as well as all other organizations.

Since churches are public organizations, and have a brand or mark, each church must become more intentional about managing its brand by formalizing, communicating, and protecting the church's name and image in the community.

“A church must communicate to the community who it is, why it is, when it is, where it is, and what it is.”

—Gary L. McIntosh

For instance, if other churches use a similar church name—say Calvary Lutheran or Calvary Baptist or Calvary Community—it may cloud the perceptions, or even ruin the good image, which your church has in the minds of people in the community. Thus, protecting the church's distinct brand is a key role of the leadership team.

At the very least a church must communicate to the community the following five aspects of its brand:

### Who It Is

Community constituents desire to know something about your church's origins and beliefs. Thus, you need to answer some of the following questions for your publics: What is our church's name and what does it mean? What does our church value? What is our history? How did our church get started?

### What It Is

People outside your church desires to know something about your church's practices and behaviors. Specifically you need to answer some of the following questions: What is our ministry like? What is our attitude toward guests? What is our dress code?

### Why It Is

Those in your community desire to know something about your church's reason for being. Thus, you need to answer some of the following questions: What is our purpose? What is our mission? What is our vision?

### Where It Is

Potential guests desire to know where your church is located. Thus, you need to answer some of the following questions: Where is our church located? How can someone find our church? What is the easiest route to our church?

### When It Is

Potential visitors desire to know what time your church meets. Thus, you need to answer the following question: What time or times do we meet?

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# Any church may be authentic.

## Managing a church's brand is important in any sized church.

While managing a church's brand is necessary in any size of church, it is critically important as a church increases in size. A larger church impacts such a wide swath of people that its name becomes extremely well known. The leadership team must take greater care in communicating what the church is and is not to the community, and perhaps the nation.

### Is Your Church Authentic?

A major aspect of brand management relates to the problem of maintaining authenticity. Some people automatically perceive smaller churches as more authentic than larger ones. People just do not see how a large church that offers professional worship services, specialized ministry leaders, and expansive facilities can remain authentic. In the minds of some the larger a church grows the more watered down its brand becomes.

Growth and authenticity are not incompatible, however. Authenticity is not a function of size but of a church's connection to four strands of meaning.

#### **First, authenticity comes from being connected to a place with a story.**

A church with a unique story becomes a place that people find authentic. All churches, but particularly larger ones, must be adept at telling their special story to help people connect to it as an authentic place. What is your church's unique story? How are you communicating it to your community?

#### **Second, authenticity comes from being connected to people who are passionate.**

Churches that are able to motivate their people to be passionate about ministry are perceived as authentic. The more your people know what they believe and believe what they know, the higher the authenticity. How passionate are your people about their faith? How are you helping them be more so?

#### **Third, authenticity comes from being connected to a great purpose.**

The more your church can envision and pursue great goals for the future, the more it will be authentic. What great purpose are you seeking to fulfill? What is God's vision for your church in the next five years?

#### **Fourth, authenticity comes from being connected to values.**

The story a church tells must align with its actions. How well does your church's practices and behaviors align with its story? Do you walk your talk?

An authentic church may be small, medium, or large. The issue is not its size but how well it connects to its story, passion, purpose, and values.

With this definition of authenticity a small church may actually be less authentic than a larger one. Yet, as a church grows ever larger the leaders must manage the brand to make certain it remains true to its history.

How well are you communicate your church's brand to the community? Is your church authentic? How do you know?



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