

TRUSTGLUE

11 ways to create a first impression that sticks

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What is Trust Glue?

Have you ever had an experience at a church or business that didn't quite sit right, but you can't put your finger on why? This sensation is likely your response to a breach of trust: Their self-proclaimed values weren't consistent with your experience.

Trust is like glue that makes someone stick around. Be true to yourself and live that out through your branding, marketing and advertising. Consistency creates trust glue that sticks.

Would you find it strange if you went out for a nice steak dinner at a high-end establishment, and they offered a \$1.49 burger being served by a waiter in a tuxedo. On the other hand, it wouldn't be strange to see a \$1.49 burger at a drive-thru. Is one right and the other wrong? No. Simply put, your expectation wouldn't be consistent with your experience. One of those restaurants is not being true to who they are, and that waters down their trust glue.



If you can sum up your experience with “I thought I was getting this, but they did that instead?” then it's a trust issue. “They advertised having the best chef in town, but my chicken wasn't cooked properly,” or, “The sign says they're a loving church, but not one person was smiling.” Or “Aunt Gertrude said the worship leader sings like a bird. She was wrong.” In this case, the trust is more like water than glue; It doesn't make you want to stick around.

Every opportunity that someone walks into your church is an opportunity to be consistent and strengthen the trust glue. A visitor will decide to come back based on whether or not they trust you after their experience.

Trust Glue is stickiest when your branding matches your marketing, and is relayed accurately in your advertising; When your church's values (branding) matches how someone experiences your church (marketing) and what they heard you say about your church (advertising). **Trust glue is about consistency.**

What is Trust Glue?

There is no neutral in marketing. Your marketing (creating an experience) is either strengthening or detracting from your brand, whether intentional or not.

Before we get any further, do you know your church' core values, and which one is your primary core value that takes priority over the others? If not, get that information from your church leadership. Your values need to be front and center as we continue our discussion on creating a first impression that reflects your values and branding.

Here are 3 terms that we'll use that are important to creating your trust glue:

Branding:

What you say about yourself - who you are and who you want to be. Not just a hope, but it's the core of who you are.

Marketing:

How people experience your branding when they interact with you.

Advertising:

Letting others know what to expect from your marketing and how that reflects your branding.

If these are consistent, then when someone visits your church, how they experience your marketing will allow them to recognize your branding which will match your advertising. You've built trust that you are who you say you are, and that consistency creates the trust glue that sticks.

**Still not sure?
Here are some examples >**

What is Trust Glue?

Here are 2 examples of Branding, Marketing and Advertising in line with a church's values:

Example 1: Your primary core value is excellence.

Branding: We are a focused on a professional, well polished church experience done with excellence.

Marketing: We start on time every time, have every aspect of service timed so that people are out at a set time, have the greeters and ushers wearing a set uniform and prioritize a polished audio / video / visual presentation.

Advertising: "A church that fits any schedule."



Example 2: Your primary core value is relationships.

Branding: We are a casual, relationship-focused church.

Marketing: We don't have our greeters or ushers wearing uniforms, and starting on time may not be as high of a priority as the opportunity to spend a few extra minutes visiting before service. We host regular meals after church for everyone to spend time together, and we offer free coffee and donuts before service so people come early to socialize.

Advertising: "A welcoming church family."

Though these 2 examples are clear contrasts, there's no right or wrong core value your church must have. As someone once said, each church is a unique expression of God's multi-faceted grace. If you're able to clearly express and live out who you are as a church, then people will be able to clearly decide if your church is for them.

LOUD AND CLEAR:

I'm not suggesting that if your primary value is to be professional that you can't have a potluck, or if your primary value is relationships that you can't start on time, but your one primary core value needs to be evident as people experience your church in order to make trust stick – for them to trust you're being true to yourself and decide if they're a fit.



BUT, when a decision has to be made between 2 options (like starting on time or having a flexible start time in order to build relationships) your primary core value will help you determine which to prioritize in order to build trust.

How long until Trust Glue sticks?

Depending on the study (and there multiple online), most say within the first 7 - 10 minutes, people will be deciding if they'll be back to your church or not. So, if someone arrives 10 minutes before service, they're probably leaning toward a decision before service has even started.

While we invest hours of preparation into creating audio and video presentations, lighting, worship rehearsals and heart-felt sermons, those come secondary to a decision influenced by a first impression.



I've compiled a list of first-impression opportunities that most visitors, regardless of the church size, style or campus layout, will experience before service starts.

Here are some first-impression opportunities and some practical examples of how they could express your values. The key is to determine how they fit your church's values and culture. If you find that some areas don't apply to your primary core value, then consider how they could apply to your other values.

In the next few pages, we'll take a hands-on approach and consider:

- **Signage**
- **Information Center**
- **Parking Lot**
- **Refreshments**
- **Bulletin & Print Material**
- **Restrooms**
- **Campus Lighting**
- **Website**
- **Entrance Atmosphere**
- **Social Media**

11 First Impression Opportunities

#1: Signage

It may be difficult to connect a core value to your signage (for instance, it may be difficult to see how your signage would represent “Biblical Foundations” or “Taking the Gospel to the four corners of the earth”) but how consistent is your color choice, design style and font and what do those choices say about the style of your church? Is your signage consistent in reflecting your style?

Consider these signage locations:

- Road signs
- Outside building signage
- Interior signage
- Campus Signage (if you have multiple buildings or entrances on your campus)

The next page is a hands-on opportunity for you to evaluate your building signage. Print it and completed it to start your team conversation.



11 First Impression Opportunities

#1: Signage

Print this page and rate each quality below from 0 – 5 (0 says that quality is not present, and 5 says that quality is perfect), then have someone who doesn't attend your church visit your campus and do the same (maybe a neighbor, friend, or family member from out of town).

_____ Outdoor Signage is lit up at night and can be clearly read from the road.

_____ Outdoor signage is clean and in good condition.

_____ I can read everything written on outdoor signage while driving the speed limit down the road.

_____ All signage is consistent within our color scheme, design and font.

_____ There are signs in all public areas.

_____ Every way-finding sign indicates the direction to the nearest restroom without exception. (This is the most likely thing someone may be looking for on your signage – second is the kids area).

_____ When I walk in the front door, I immediately see a sign and the font is large enough to read from 1 step inside the door.

_____ Each room is labeled with visible and easy-to-read hallway signage (often on, beside or above the door).

_____ Service times and office hours are viewable from the outside of our building (in case someone visits when your campus is empty and wants to come back).

_____ Driving down the road at the speed limit, I can see that it's coming up far enough away that I can slow down to turn.

My signage score _____ / 50. My Friend's Signage Score _____/50.

Something I will do to improve my signage score in the next 30 days:

11 First Impression Opportunities

#2: Parking Lot

Parking lot attendants are essential to your first impression, even if your parking lot is small and showing someone an available space is unnecessary. The reality is that your parking lot attendants aren't really there to show drivers where to park; they're purpose is to make a positive first impression.

Have your parking lot team walk the lot and make sure any garbage is cleaned up, and sidewalks and walkways are clear of snow, leaves and tree branches. Cleaning up garbage may not be a reflection of a core value, but what is the first impression if someone pulls in and sees the garbage or has to walk through a pile of leaves to get to the front door?



Is your parking lot lit properly for all of your service times? If you only have Sunday morning services, then this may not be a consideration, but if you have evening services on the weekend, or mid-week services, is your parking lot lit up enough to feel safe and inviting?

Your team could help a mom with her bags while she carries her newborn in the car seat, assist an elderly person to the door, or hold an umbrella while it's raining. Find a way to use these practical tools to reinforce your core values.

Ideas and Examples:

If a core value is relationships, this is a great chance to welcome people by name, wave to them as they park, give the kids a high five and help them to the door.

If a core value is prayer, then pray with them as they walk to the front door or have them roll down their window as they drive in and pray with them.

If a core value is being welcoming, you could have designated parking for first-time visitors and greet new visitors who park in that spot with a welcome gift like a t-shirt or information package.

11 First Impression Opportunities

#2: Parking Lot

Hands On:

If you do not currently have a parking lot team, list 3 people who you have seen demonstrate your values, and could represent your values well by getting involved in that team.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Talk with your leader about the importance that a parking lot team plays in first impressions, and ask his or her input on how to approach the people on your list.

If you have a parking lot team, what ONE thing can they incorporate to demonstrate your values?

and I will request implementation by this date: _____

11 First Impression Opportunities

#3: Bulletin & Print Material

Your bulletin or print material may be one of the only physical things that a first-time guest will take home with them from church. Here are some considerations for creating maximum impact with your print:

- Who is the primary user of our bulletin? (New members, members, people who only come every few weeks, etc.)
- What would be the perceived value if we chose not to have a bulletin, or if we don't have one, what would be the perceived value if we had one?
- What is the content of the bulletin? Is it necessary to show everything that is happening, or just the highlights pointing people to our website for more information?
- If someone is handing out the bulletin, what do they say as they're greeting people and handing it out?
- If the bulletin isn't being handed out, what is the reasoning for how and where it's available?
- What quality of paper are we using for our print? Is it consistent across invitations, sign up sheets and bulletins?
- What action are we asking people to take with our connection card? Do people take a portion with them? Is it easy to write on? Are the spaces large enough and is the paper thick enough for writing?
- What could we do to increase the number of connection cards returned to us?
- Does every piece of print have our logo and contact information? If someone takes it with them and wants to follow up later, is it clear how to do that?

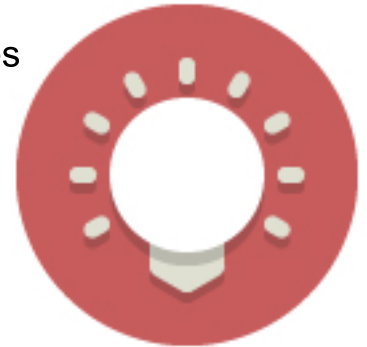


11 First Impression Opportunities

#4: Lighting

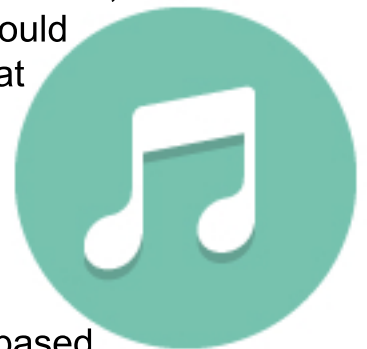
The atmosphere on your campus can say a lot to reflect your values. Your lighting, ambient music and decor help set that tone and give a first impression. Here are some questions for discussion about the impression you're creating when someone comes to your church for the first time:

- Is the lighting creating an atmosphere that enforces our values or detracting from it?
- Is it consistently cool white or warm white light, or are we using colors intentionally within the space?
- Are any bulbs burnt out?
- Are the lighting fixtures primarily decorative, primarily functional, or hidden (like up-lighting)?
- How would it change the atmosphere if we used more or less light?



#5: Ambient Music

- Do we have music playing in the entrance or outdoor area, and is that consistent with the type of music someone would expect to hear in service? Why or why not and is that intentional?
- How would it change the atmosphere if it were quieter or louder?
- Is it always a consistent volume, or does it change based on event or is it inconsistent because of unclear standards?



Ideas & Examples:

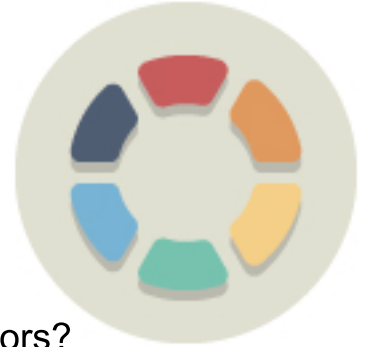
If a core value is relationships, you might have some smooth jazz playing at low volume in the entrance that people can easily have a conversation over. A value like Worship or Expressive Praise creates an obvious choice.

11 First Impression Opportunities

#6: Decor

Questions to consider if your decor is creating a consistent impression:

- Is there furniture in our entrance area? (For some churches, this may be more of a space consideration than a values consideration.)
- Does the furniture / decor style, arrangement, and layout give an opportunity for our values to be recognized.
- Are the paint and wallpaper colors warm or cool colors? Why did we choose those colors?
- Find another building in your area whose entrance has the same style as yours (furniture, colors, design). How do you feel walking into that building? Does that building feel welcoming and inviting in the way we would like our church to be?



Ideas and Examples:

If a core value is relationships, then your furniture could be arranged in a way that creates conversations rather than a row of chairs lining the wall.

If a core value is scripture, then you could have quotes in frames or vinyl scripture decals on the wall or digital signage that rotates various quotes.

If your core value is missions, you could have images of different missionaries and ministries you support and a world map with pins of all of the places that your missionaries are serving, or decal arrows on your entrance floor or signage pointing the actual compass directions to your different missionaries.

On the next page is a hands on way, to evaluate your lighting, ambient music and decor >>

11 First Impression Opportunities

Lighting, Ambient Music & Decor

Hands On:

Print this page. Think of a local building whose entrance lighting and decor is similar to your church. It could be a library, hospital, store, movie theater, restaurant or government building.

That building is: _____

Without mentioning your church, ask 3 people to give you 1 or 2 words that describe the style of decor at (the building above). Write down their words:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

On a scale of 1-10, rate how well those words would match your branding if someone used them to describe your church:

worst 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 best

Based on this page, you can see the associations that someone who walks into your building for the first time may also be making. There may be nothing wrong with your decor, but if people are instantly saying 'This reminds me of our hospital' then that association may be a reason to re-evaluate.

Something I will do to improve my decor score in the next 30 days:

11 First Impression Opportunities

#7: Information Kiosk

Whether you call it an information Kiosk, Guest Services Desk or something else, it's essential to have a central location that guests can get more information and ask questions.

Make this area clearly visible when someone walks through the front door, or mention it during every service. Your regulars may tire of hearing about it, but for a first-time guest, this information could help them determine if they'll be back.

- Do we have an area where guests can get more information?
- Is that location obvious to find?
- Does it have a name that someone may not associate with an information kiosk when hearing it the first time and is that intentional?
- Do we have someone serving guests there, or do they serve themselves? Why?
- If they serve themselves, how do they get more information if they need it, and how obvious is that next step?
- Is the design consistent with the rest of the building. Does it fit?
- If there is someone serving who doesn't have an answer to a question, what is our process to get that answer to that guest?

Hands On:

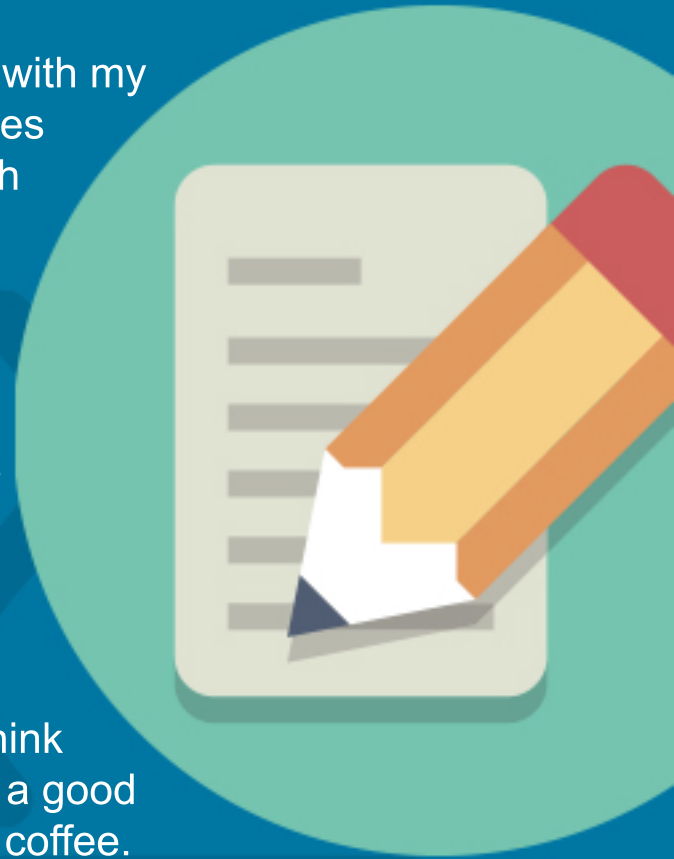
If you don't already have one, create a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) system for your information area. This could be a binder or a page on your website with an iPad, or something else. Create a way for someone to write out a question they don't know the answer to (either a guest or a volunteer at the kiosk) and a follow up strategy to get them that answer.

11 First Impression Opportunities

#8: Refreshments

You might be saying “Adam, don’t mess with my donuts and coffee... by the way, what does that have to do with building trust through consistency?” I’m glad you asked. Here are some questions to start your discussion:

- Do you offer refreshments before, during, between or after services?
- Are they free or available for purchase?
- Are they high quality? (You may think this is an obvious answer: To give a good first impression serve high-quality coffee. But imagine you’re brewing \$20 bags of branded coffee to serve for free with a spread of fresh-baked European dessert options from the local deli while your branding is to financially support as many missionaries as possible. There’s the conflict.)
- What is the packaging like for those refreshments? Maybe you only offer coffee in mugs, and not to-go cups after service so people need to stay as they drink their coffee to socialize. Maybe it’s only to-go cups for convenience.
- If you sell refreshments, is there an opportunity to show that a portion of the profit goes toward enforcing your value? (ie. sent overseas, invested in a local school, clothing for the homeless shelter, or support a training program offered to the community)



11 First Impression Opportunities

#9: Restrooms

(*Washrooms* for the Canadians)

Sounds awkward, feels awkward discussing it, so let's cut to the chase: Some people will use it within a few minutes of arriving.

Does it represent you well? Consider decor, cleanliness, is it in good repair (including ceiling tiles or the soap dispenser leak... not just whether or not the toilet flushes) and smells (yep, get an air freshener).



...quick, let's get to the next page >>

11 First Impression Opportunities

#10: Website

Your website could be the worst offender in destroying your trust glue, because unlike someone who walks into your building and sees it for what it is, on your website, you choose if you'll represent yourself accurately.

Consider your website an advertising pre-cursor to someone visiting your church. It's your first opportunity to create trust glue – to tell them what your branding is, and illustrate how it's experienced. This advertising opportunity will set the stage for them to evaluate your consistency.



How a website can destroy trust:

Let's say you misrepresent yourself with stock photos of young people when your church mostly appeals to older couples and you have videos of a rock/worship concert you hosted once and made it look like that's how your worship is on a typical weekend, but really you sing mostly hymns.

This choice to mis-represent yourself destroys your trust glue twice:

1) An older couple looking for a traditional church with contemplative worship sees your website with pictures of young families, and a rock concert. They may choose not to visit (even if your church in reality would be a great fit).

2) A young family that feels like they would fit in with the people (Stock photos) on your website and likes the rock concert video. What do you think experiencing an actual service is going to do to your trust glue, and who else might they tell about their experience?

Trust glue sticks when you are who you say you are, not who you want to be. When you're consistent with who you really are, that shows through in how someone experiences your church.

11 First Impression Opportunities

#10: Website

Print this page. It's a simple way to evaluate if your website is hitting minimum standards for usability and consistency for your branding:

_____ Our website is mobile responsive and automatically adapts to any screen size. In 2014, the number of people visiting websites on a mobile device surpassed the number of people browsing on a desktop or laptop. If your site isn't mobile, you may be frustrating more than half of potential visitors.

_____ Our phone number, service times and directions are above the fold (can be seen or clicked before scrolling on any device). It's probable that over half of potential visitors are looking for this information on their first and possibly only visit to your website.

_____ Our website loads within 4 seconds (best if it's 2 or less). Not sure exactly how to test this? Use tools.pingdom.com to see how long your site takes to load, and which files are taking up the most bandwidth.

_____ The pictures on our website are relevant to the content (kids pictures on the kids page, staff pictures on the staff page)

_____ The pictures on our website are an accurate depiction of our demographic. If our demographic is wide, so are the pictures.

_____ We have links to all of our social media channels from our website.

_____ There is a way to sample our content (audio or video from the worship and/or message)

_____ There is a link to online giving (if you offer online giving).

_____ Our domain name is easy to remember and doesn't include any dashes (if someone can't remember it, they won't find it.)

11 First Impression Opportunities

#11: Social Media

Here are some ideas on how core values could be reflected on Social Media. Like your website, this is possibly an avenue that people will visit before they even drive up to your property. Make sure your trust glue sticks by being true to your values and represent who you really are.

Ideas and Examples:

Core Value: Relationships

How it could reflect on Social Media: Post testimonies of people who have come to your church with an image of that person, or a video of that person talking about their testimony, stories about small groups, invitations to connect with other people (like social events), and generic images that people already on your facebook page can share and invite their friends.

Core Value: Presence of God

How it could reflect on Social Media: Videos of your worship or popular worship songs you sing, clips of people being prayed for, live video (facebook live / periscope) asking for prayer requests and praying for people.

Core Value: Multiplication / Evangelism

How it could reflect on Social Media: Create images or videos that your people can share to invite people to your church (could be funny invite videos, “about Us” information videos, or images to share about upcoming events. Give people encouraging / inspirational quotes about reaching other people, and video or image testimonies of people who have come to your church and gotten saved in the last 12 months.

These are simply examples. You could have these core values, but they appear in other ways, or your core values may be totally different. Discover what's best in communicating your core values!

11 First Impression Opportunities

#11: Social Media

Print this page: Complete the questions below using your social media posts from the last 30 days.

Section A: In the last 30 days across all social media channels, how many of your posts were:

Text only: _____

Included images created or shared from someone else: _____

Included images that we created (design or photographed) _____

Included videos created or shared from someone else: _____

Included videos that we created: _____

Section B: In the first blank, fill in the number from Section A, then count how many of those posts were centered around your values for the 2nd blank. 2nd blank divided by 1st blank = % that were value centered.

_____ # of posts that were text only. Of those posts, _____ talked about or reflected our core values. (2nd number divided by 1st number = _____% of text posts that reflected our values)

_____ # of posts included an image shared from someone else.
_____ reflected our core values = _____% centered around values.

_____ # of posts included a custom graphic, or image we took. _____ reflected our values = _____% or custom images that reflected our values.

_____ # of posts that included someone else's video created by someone else. _____ reflected our core values = _____% that reflected our values.

_____ # of posts that included a video we created. Of those posts, _____ reflected our core values. (2nd number divided by 1st number = _____% videos we created that reflect our values)

11 First Impression Opportunities

#11: Social Media

Section C: Using the percentages from section B, fill in the blanks below based on the percentage of posts that reflected your core values:

_____ % of Text Only posts that reflected our values

_____ % Other peoples images that reflected our values

_____ % Our own images that reflected our values

_____ % Other peoples videos that reflected our values

_____ % Our own videos that reflected our values

Add up the 5 numbers in the blanks then divide by 5 = _____ %

This is the average number of posts in the last 30 days that have reflected your core values.

Does this number need to be 100%? Not necessarily, but it could be.

***Remember, there is no neutral zone in marketing.
Everything presents an image of what you value.
Everything plays a factor into whether or not your
trust glue sticks.***

About Adam



I oversee marketing and communications at Life Church in Fort Myers, Florida. I would love to hear how you're creating trust glue that sticks at your church, and talk about the opportunity to speak at your next event or conference.

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Thanks for reading,
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