South Memorial Christian Church – Mark Valadez

Social Media Outreach

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December 20, 2019

# Abstract

I will be working with Mark Valadez who is the preacher and owner of South Memorial Christian Church. The church is located at 8411 S Flores St. in San Antonio, Texas. They are a relatively small church that is trying grow. The church works to spread the bible and wants to work towards helping the community with free services, such as, counseling and giving shelter/food to those who need it. I will be focusing on building their online presence to reach those that have not heard of them and their services before.

The church was founded over forty years ago, in fact they just celebrated their anniversary last month. The preacher and owner of the building is Mark Valadez, who took over after the original preacher retired. The church holds services three times a week, twice on Sundays, one in the morning and one in the evening, and one on Wednesday evenings. The church works to spread what the Bible says and offers many free services to those in need.

The church, technically, only has one full-time employee. However, they do have volunteers that help throughout the church, like the person in charge of the music. Depending on any events thrown, they can also have five to fifteen additional volunteers. The church is fairly small at the moment having a regular flow of about 30 members. Every now and then, they may have more, particularly during the holidays or less, usually during summer time.

South Memorial Christian Church, started very small, having just enough members to fill a place the size of a small one-story house. While still small, they have grown enough to allow them to buy a bigger space, in a “proper” church building. Since the church only has one full-time employee and he is also the owner of the building he makes most of the decisions. However, in an effort to be democratic, any big decisions, he talks about with the “council” which are the elders and deacons. After talking to them he then talks about the pros and cons with the church members to receive their opinions.

The majority of the church members are Mexican, with a very small number of whites and blacks. There are an even mix of male and female from low (30k) to medium (60k) income households. The church is based on the south side of the city and the majority of the people come from that area. Although, there are a handful of people that come from other parts of the city and some from small towns just outside the city. The ages of the members vary, with the majority being from thirty-five to sixty-five, and a small number of young children from two to ten.

At the moment the church works within themselves and does not serve the local community. However, there are plans to work with the community in the future. The church gains their funding strictly from donations from the members. While there is no direct competition, they are indirectly competing with other churches within the area that are of different beliefs, for example, Baptist or Catholic churches.

The state of the church industry, across all religions, is always fluctuating. However, the past few years have seen memberships decreasing both locally and nationally. In 1945 or earlier, church membership was thriving and constantly increasing. After 1945 we can see a decrease in church membership. A decrease that continues to happen as the years pass by. Nationally, less than half of Americans hold a church membership. Locally, attendance is decreasing to the point that some churches fade away due to low membership. However, there a few churches that are seeing an increase in membership. The reason why these churches are booming as a lot to do with them embracing the changing times. They are on social media, play music that is outside of the traditional gospel music, and preach in ways that are animated and use today’s pop culture as a form to relate to the younger generation. I, personally, saw a church advertise using a Baby Yoda meme.

Mark is looking to expand his church’s membership and make a bigger impact among the community. He wants to really focus on the services that the church can do for others in need and wants to bring the church into the digital age. As the church had humble beginnings, starting in a very small building, they don’t know what else they can do to grow. As such, I will be bringing the church into the digital age by building a website and social media profiles. I will retain full control of the website and profiles so the owner doesn’t have to worry about them on top of his regular duties. I will also focus on building the church’s brand.

The church has an excellent reputation among the members, both current and past. However, they do not currently have a reputation among the community, nor have they accomplished or even tried any P.R. efforts in the past few years, much less the last six months. They do not use any communication channels outside of word of mouth and even then, that is becoming less common. As they are not involved with the community, they do not yet receive suggestions or feedback. All of this will change in the future.

I will need to address the fact that they have no social media presence. They also, despite the fact that they offer many free services, don’t advertise the church. They rely heavily on word of mouth and a fingers crossed mentality. As such, my main focus of my campaign will be to expand their reach through a social media presence and website. I will be setting up accounts on Twitter and Instagram, and starting a Facebook business page.

By building a website and social media presence for the church, I will bring my client closer to his goals. On Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram I will be posting various information, including events and pictures of the events. People will be able to go to the website and gather more information of about the church and services. Through the website people will also be able to see some videos of sermons, allowing people to get an idea of how the preacher preaches.

The owner is completely excited about the changes and is allowing me full freedom to take charge. On top of this he is also willing to give me whatever support is needed. However, there are two main pitfalls I am expecting throughout this process. The first is that some of the older members are a lot more reserved to the changes. They have the mentality of, “it’s worked before, why can’t it work now.” They are afraid that the church will no longer be the same if they join the digital age. They are also afraid that any new members that may join will change the concept of the church itself.

The second pitfall I am expecting is the fact that since they are a small church, there won’t be a lot of support or resources. For example, I may not have the funding to go all out for an event or for advertising an event.

I am extremely excited to get started on this project and gain real working experience in my field of study. I know to expect some push back and that there will be things that go wrong. I tend to error on the side of caution with Murphey’s Law in mind, but I also have the owner behind me willing and ready to do what he can. I have confidence in my abilities, along with the skills I’ve gained this far, to help my client reach his goals.

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