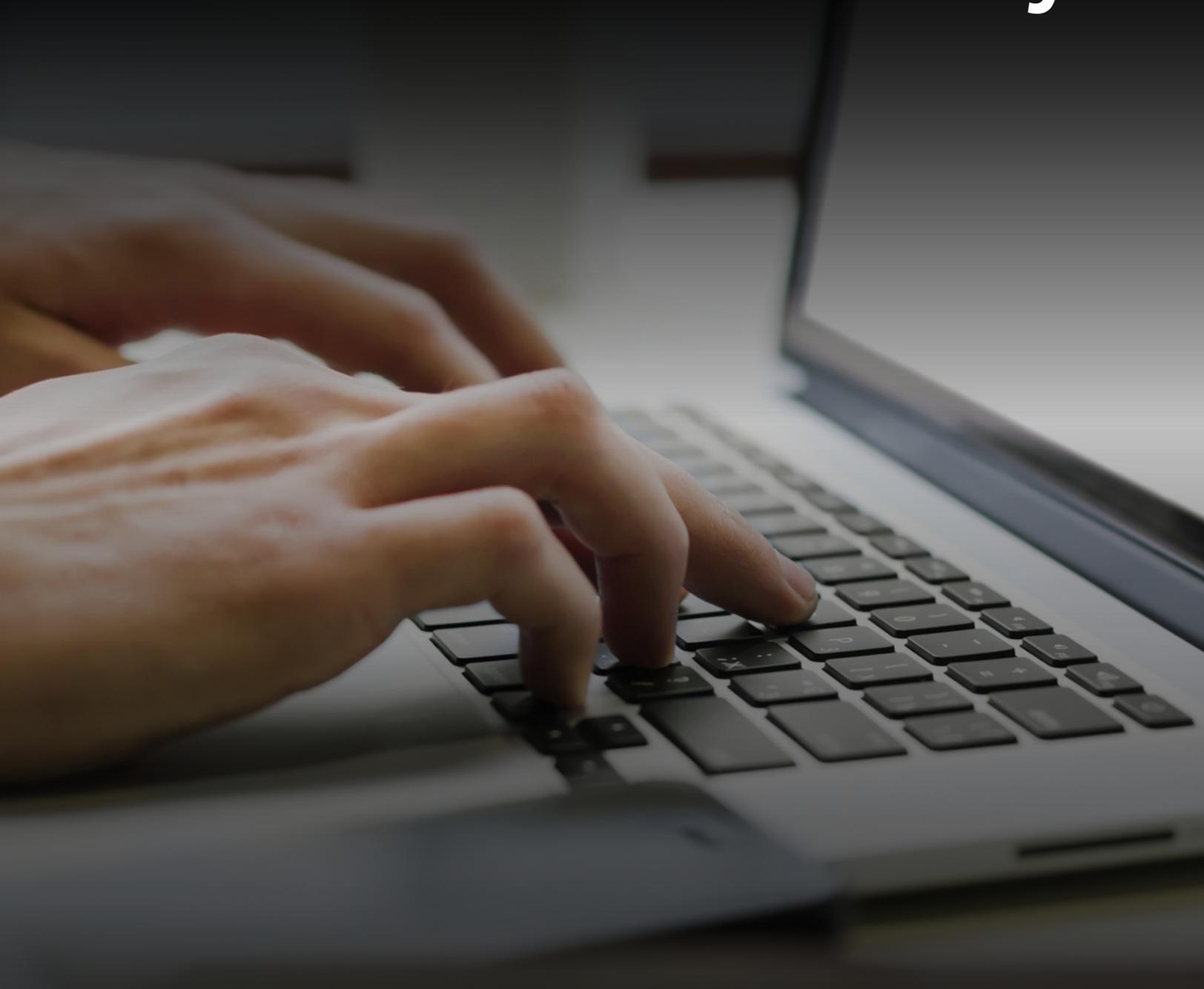


stuff you wish they taught in seminary



5 Reasons

**WE CHANGED CHURCH MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE
(& MAYBE YOU SHOULD TOO?)**

RICH BIRCH

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At the core of your ministry is a pile of information about people. Registration data from special events, check-in data from your kids ministry and donor data from first-time givers are all examples of information that can give you insights on how to serve your community better. **Having a robust church management system that can take care of and leverage all that data is vitally important for growing churches today.** In fact, leading churches spend a tremendous amount of time, effort and energy on using their data wisely.

Within the last year, our church moved to Church Community Builder as our database. Although no system is 100% perfect, I've been tremendously happy with our switch. **I'd like you to think about what system you're currently using at your church and whether you should change it.** Our process took over 18 months to complete ... here's a look back at what got us thinking about changing in the first place:

- **It Went Stale** // At one point, the software we were using was on the leading edge of church management systems but then they stopped developing it. We had a list of features that we looked forward to seeing but it seemed like the horizon for new, significant updates kept getting pushed farther and farther back. We live in an age when major platforms count the time between updates in hours and days. If you can't remember the last time something major improved on your church management system, it might be time to switch to something else. The companies who own these systems know which issues their users have. If they aren't willingly moving toward improving their software, they are simply ignoring their customers. Even worse, they are slowing down the ability of your church to make an impact in your community!

- **It Became a Joke** // The name of our old system became the butt of countless jokes. People would say things like root canals were better than working with our system. I noticed that many managers avoided working with the system directly. Instead, they asked their subordinates to do even simple tasks like looking up addresses. People found ways to avoid doing core functions like event registration or volunteer communication through the system because they had soured on it. Although these issues were partly due to the fact that our training over the years wasn't as good as it could have been, we recognized that the tide had turned. People weren't going to embrace the old software regardless of what we did. Changing to a new church database system gave us the opportunity to retrain our team and to right the wrongs from past systems.

● **Good for Us ... Not for Our People** // Over time, our system became dangerously good for our staff but decreasingly used by everyone else. If a church database system doesn't actually improve the lives of our guests, volunteers and donors, it can become insular. A core role of church leaders is to be on the lookout for those areas that are more about the staff than the people; frankly, our database had become just that. To put a finer point on it, our finance team enjoyed working with the system but no one else did. Only a small fraction of our community ever interacted directly with a system that was supposed to make life easier for interacting with everyone. We missed out on opportunities for people to connect with one another and with the broader church, which ultimately decreased the impact of our church.

● **Data Silos** // Think for a moment about how you use people's data. Is it all centrally located in one information management system, or is it spread across a number of spreadsheets and documents? We got to the point where information about people was stored in our church management software, in a small group leaders contact list and in volunteer spreadsheets, just to name a few places. This is dangerous for churches because

information can slip through the cracks easily, which means that people can slip through the cracks easily, too. The management of people's information is ultimately a pastoral care concern because connections with people are the beginning of relationships. If you don't have a central place to connect all that information, you risk losing potential relationships.

● **Team Empowerment** // Our leadership team selected our original church management system when we first planted the church. As we grew, the people who selected the database were no longer its primary users. Empowering and releasing our leaders meant ensuring that those users selected and managed the system. Obviously, we didn't go about this change lightly; however, it is important to notice that we made this change to empower the people who ultimately needed this system to work for them. We saw the change in church management systems as part of our releasing control and enabling the people God has brought us to lead the church. We wanted them to know that we trusted them to make this decision. Whether we stayed with our old system or went to a new system, ultimately that decision rested with the leaders who carried this part of our ministry.

A few other resources to help you as you consider switching systems:

- [Church Community Builder...](#) where we landed
- [10 Part Recipe for a Church Database People Would Actually Use ...](#) a wish list of sorts
- [Kevin Negaard on Managing Resources, Time & Numbers in a Growing Church ...](#) a good conversation about the mindset of managing data and numbers

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