



# CASE STUDY

## THE OPPORTUNITY

When I was hired as the Communication Director for Fellowship Greenville, I initially had one part-time assistant. Over the first four months in the role, I got to know the staff, structure, policies, and procedures in order to determine the best way to meet the communication needs of the organization. The primary areas of opportunity included:

- 1 Communication between departments was poor.** This led to multiple departments scheduling events on the same date, fracturing the audience. In addition, the overall messaging coming out of each department was incohesive, at best, and sometimes contradictory, at worst.
- 2 Branding wasn't consistent.** When I started, I found at least five different greens used for the primary mark in the brand, without rhyme or reason. One department manager had even created his own version of the logo "because he liked it better" and was using that on all his external materials.
- 3 Strategy was silo'd.** While the organization had an executive leadership team, its members weren't necessarily representative of the entire staff and sometimes didn't find out about programs or policies until they were already participant-facing. Furthermore, the organizational strategy wasn't being consistently applied across the entire audience.

## THE ORGANIZATION

Fellowship Greenville is a large church in South Carolina. Originally founded in 1946 as Southside Baptist, the church underwent two name and branding changes between 2001 and 2013. By 2015, attendance had grown such that an \$11M capital campaign was launched for a new auditorium and a new student building. The same year, leadership began a search for a key staff member to lead communications.

**Employees:** 50-100 **Annual Budget:** \$6.4M

- 4 Creative projects were being completed in an inefficient manner** that often left the bulk of the work unfinished. One department had its own creative staff, but rarely "shared." Without a creative lead, they often were left spinning their wheels trying to prioritize deliverables. Other departments' projects hardly received any attention, due to a lack of resources. External partners also frequently requested, but did not receive, creative support, expecting a service organization of that size to have the bandwidth to help out in the community.
- 5 The holistic participant experience was lacking** as a result. While the impression made from the stage was extremely favorable, the web site, signage, and printed materials communicated a message that was often confusing, and even frustrating, to participants.

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# THE STRATEGY

To address these opportunities, I implemented the following key changes:

1. **Centralize under an organizational communications and creative department, run as an internal creative agency.** We moved three staff members from other teams into the newly formed department. This new department served the communications and creative needs of the entire organization. In addition, a member of this team began participating in other departmental meetings on a monthly basis, to keep the lines of communication open.
2. **Refine the logo and develop a brand style guide.** After listening to the staff's reasons for changing the logo as they saw fit, we refined the existing logo to better meet their needs. We then created a style guide everyone could not only "live with," but also consistently implement.
3. **Create a clear communications strategy that is in line with the overall organizational strategy.** With consideration of the types of projects put forth, we developed a Communications Matrix outlining four levels of attention available for projects. Whenever a project was identified, it was assigned a level based on its alignment with the organizational goals. That level then determined our team's course of action.
4. **Move from making announcements to sharing stories.** The best communicators are great storytellers. To make a big church feel small, we helped people get to know one another better by sharing their stories. This was accomplished through both written and filmed stories, disseminated in a quarterly printed magazine, social media posts, and from the stage.
5. **Go digital.** Instead of a weekly printed bulletin, we moved to an app with a calendar of events, song sets, sermons (notes, plus audio/video replays), and general church information. It grew to include volunteer opportunities and messaging.
6. **Streamline the internal and external web sites.** Together with the IT department, we spent nine months researching and building a plan of action to implement new software and hardware systems connecting the finance, HR, admin, and communication tools. We then spent another nine months in development before the new sites were launched.
7. **Consider the whole environment.** As the capital improvements were completed, we worked with the facilities team to provide clear, user-friendly signage helping people move throughout the campus.



Brand Style Guide



New Visitor Brochure



*Life in Fellowship* Magazine



*A Prayer Collective* Family Cards—  
Created as part of a year-long initiative that also included an adult workbook, a student workbook, a web site, an audio CD, and a social media campaign.



## THE RESULTS

- » **Increased productivity.** Within one year of forming the centralized department, we were not only meeting all of the internal communications and creative needs, we were also donating 10% of our hours to community partners.
- » **More effective team.** As a creative professional with two decades of work experience, I was able to provide leadership that helped each team member grow their skills. The overall quality of our work increased significantly.
- » **Stronger leadership.** With greater confidence, we were able to take ownership of more projects. This led to us initiating and launching a weekly live-stream of the Sunday services and various other events.
- » **Brand consistency and clarity.** The new web site streamlined both internal and external communication. Checks and balances also helped ensure a consistent voice in all external correspondence.
- » **More connected audience.** Telling participant stories helped build community across the audience. People shared about how the magazine and short films connected them with people they previously didn't know, saying, "It made a big church feel much smaller."

"Wendy is a great strategic thinker with the ability to see a much bigger picture and she brings solutions to problems we don't even see. **Wendy was quickly moved into greater leadership roles because of her ability to lead, work with people, and get things done.** High functioning, skilled, team players who can lead are to find and Wendy possesses all of that and more!"

—ROB MARKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- » **Superior inter-department communications.** Our involvement in all departments brought a greater level of alignment across the entire organization.
- » **Better user experience.** The refined branding and cohesive New Visitor Brochure helped first-time guests have a better sense as to what makes Fellowship Greenville different. Survey responses revealed more positive user feedback and increased audience retention.
- » **Improved event planning.** The quarterly events calendar we created forced everyone to get together and plan ahead, which eliminated double-bookings and helped prevent "over programming."
- » **Cost-savings.** The communications budget was able to be reduced, because of the efficiency of the centralized team and the decreased printing costs (due to the move to a quarterly printed magazine, from weekly bulletins, and the reliance on digital media).