

Connected Lodges

A guided, supplemental piece to
Freemasonmarketing.com

By WB Matt Johnson



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- **Agenda**
 - The Problem
 - Key Thoughts
 - The Basics
 - Design
 - Homepage
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Agenda

This document will broadly and quickly cover items relevant to a Lodge's digital infrastructure. This document's target audience are those Lodge's still without a website, in 2016.

However there's always room for improvement with any endeavor. Especially regarding PR.

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The Problem

It's the 21st century, we need to embrace the modern world. In order to be found by those that are seeking light, we need to be where they're looking.

Here you'll find ideas to do just that.

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Today's Age

We are an ancient tradition in the 21st century. We need to look the part or we're doomed. Period. End of story. Your Lodge may have the greatest ritual work, best pancakes, esoteric discussions or the youngest officer line in the fraternity but there's more to being relevant in this age.

If you want your Lodge to survive in the coming millennia and capture the interest of my fellow "millennials", **let's get digital.**

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Greetings

Before getting too far along, greetings from Blendon 339 of the [14th District](#) in Westerville, Ohio! I'm [Matt Johnson](#), a 31 year old WM for 2016 who has been the caretaker of www.blendon339.com since my raising in 2009.

I also happen to be a Senior Marketing Technologist, with relevant experience that I've been applying towards my Lodge's future.

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The Problem

I'm here to ask you some serious questions about the future of our fraternity, and your Lodge specifically.

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The Problem

I'm legitimately concerned for us, so let's role-play for a moment.

If I know nothing about Freemasonry and live in your area – where am I going to look? What am I going to find when I look around?

I'm going to start by searching online for a local lodge, using my computer, smartphone or tablet.

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The Problem

Am I going to find your lodge's website (*you do have one right?!?*) with recent or accurate information?

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The Problem

Some Lodges still don't have a website.

Some haven't updated their websites in over a decade.

Many have very confusing layouts & eye-sore designs reminiscent of the year 1997, spinning animations everywhere, a guestbook from 2001 and an officer line from 2003.

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The Problem

Our most basic and essential marketing & communications tool that could be working 24/7/365 isn't being utilized well.

You need a **perfect online ashlar to build a foundation from.**

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The Problem

This is an internet-driven era. You have approximately 10 seconds or less when I find your homepage for me to gauge if I'm wasting my time. Not in the concept of Freemasonry, but in your specific Lodge. I'd be more likely to close the page, never looking back because I think Lodge XYZ is a joke or a dead organization.

That was their first real impression of you, possibly the fraternity.

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The Problem

I often hear “we only want the most interested candidates”; that’s great, but give them something to be interested in.

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The Problem

“What the public sees is the perception the general public has about our great fraternity. Make us proud. Be a Positive PR Man for Masonry.”

- **R.W. Brother Jack L. Allen, Grand Marshall**

Every Mason is a P.R. Man for Freemasonry:

http://www.gloho.com/education/Every_Mason_Is_A_PR_Man_For_Freemasonry.pdf

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The Problem

It's basic, it's fundamental, we're often missing it by miles.

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Key Thoughts

- Does your Lodge look alive to the outside world?
- How easy is it for the curious public (and potential members) to find you & learn more about you?
- Can they subscribe to you via email, Facebook, etc?

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Key Thoughts

People have the expectation today to be able to find information about an interest online, to engage that interest.

You need a website, an actual domain name for your identity.

You don't need an executive level website or a daily blog; but you do need to consider if you're at least doing the basics.

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Key Thoughts

There are a plethora of free tools available to help both the Geek and non-Geek alike account for this, they're not hard to utilize. You just need to take it seriously.

A few examples can be found at

<http://www.freemasonmarketing.com/working-tools>

Let's explore together how we can help you make your Lodge's website one of the great working tools of our profession.

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What's The Takeaway?

This is a media rich world these days and we need to communicate to our local communities in ways that work for us 24/7/365 in the easiest, most cost effective ways possible.

We need to make it easier for the local public to find and subscribe to our information, event updates, announcements, etc.

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What's The Takeaway?

How hard do you want to make it for someone new to the fraternity to find you?

Make it as easy as possible.

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What's The Takeaway?

Multi-channel communications are key.

- Not everyone reads the local city paper
 - Or any news paper...
- Not everyone wants an email newsletter
- Not everyone has a Facebook account

We need to be where the public is looking.

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What's The Takeaway?

Cost effective website solutions are available for even the most technologically unsophisticated and inexperienced.

There are simply no excuses any more.

We, as a fraternity need to take this seriously.

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The Basics

- The following includes some basic concepts that a Lodge needs to be aware of to optimize a modern digital PR infrastructure
- These notes come from observations I've made of other Lodge websites over the years
- Seemingly trivial items often get overlooked that are a great hindrance to a Lodge's digital success

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The Basics

- Even at a bare minimum, a Lodge website doesn't need a lot to really shine

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The Basics

- It just needs to be taken as seriously as we do our degree work

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The Basics

- Let's start at the beginning...

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The Basics

- Buy a domain name
 - Ex: blendon339.com
- Launch Website hosting
 - I personally host 9 WordPress websites with GoDaddy, but hosts are a dime a dozen
 - <https://www.godaddy.com/hosting/wordpress-hosting>
 - Many non-Geek prefer something like the below three companies as they do the heavy lifting for a newly formed **Website Committee**
 - If you can edit a Microsoft Word Document, you can manage well with these
 1. GoDaddy Website Builder
<https://www.godaddy.com/websites/website-builder>
 2. SquareSpace <https://www.squarespace.com>
 3. WIX <http://www.wix.com/>
 4. Weebly <https://www.weebly.com>

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The Basics

- A great Lodge website can be as simple as this example:
 - Homepage
 - Meeting times, upcoming events
 - Contact Us
 - Email, contact form, phone, address
 - About Us
 - Officers
 - History

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Address Listings

- I can't stress enough how it's in your interest to make it easy to be found
- This includes your physical address, driving directions, etc
- Some notes on this can be found at <http://www.freemasonmarketing.com/internet-marketing/address-listing/>

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Design

- Every Lodge is different, before getting too deep you need to consider what your “branding” is
- We represent ourselves in meetings with lavish aprons, gloves, suits and tuxedos, shouldn't this get the same consideration? It's your public face.

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Design

- This includes the overall look, feel and messaging your Lodge wants to personify to the world
 - That world includes your own members, spouses and visiting Brethren!
- What is the first impression you want a person to see?
- Take pride in what that is
- Make a roadmap

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Design

- One-click install, mobile-friendly templates exist for:
 - SquareSpace <https://www.squarespace.com>
 - WIX <http://www.wix.com/>
 - Weebly <https://www.weebly.com>
- Blendon 339 uses WordPress, a simple “program” that is installed through its GoDaddy hosting account
 - It’s DIY, but anyone can use it with minimal learning curve
 - Mobile-friendly, one-click template installs exist here as well
 - www.godaddy.com/help/getting-started-with-wordpress-5140
- A plethora of other options exist, but more than I’d care list

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Design



- For the sake of it being the 21st century please stay away from using, or if using already I would recommend removing/changing these...
 - Animated graphics (ex: spinning Square & Compasses, flames)
 - Pixelated graphics
 - Extremely low resolution or stretched pictures do this
 - Guest books (an ancient and very dead trend)
 - Large file sizes for pictures cause websites to load slowly
 - It makes for a very bad user experience
 - If in doubt use this free online tool <http://optimizilla.com/>

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Design

- We're a fraternity steeped in symbolism and beautiful imagery, find some but don't overload visitors with 20+ esoteric pictures on a single page
- Lean, clean design with breathing space can go a long way
- Use visually compelling imagery
 - Ex: <http://www.freemasonmarketing.com/working-tools/graphics/>

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Photography

- Many Lodges have a photo of their building on their homepage or elsewhere
- I've seen great shots
- I've also seen some that make the place look downright creepy, dark or otherwise gloomy
- Some thoughts on that front are gathered here
 - <http://www.freemasonmarketing.com/working-tools/photography/>

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Mobile Devices

They matter.



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Mobile Devices

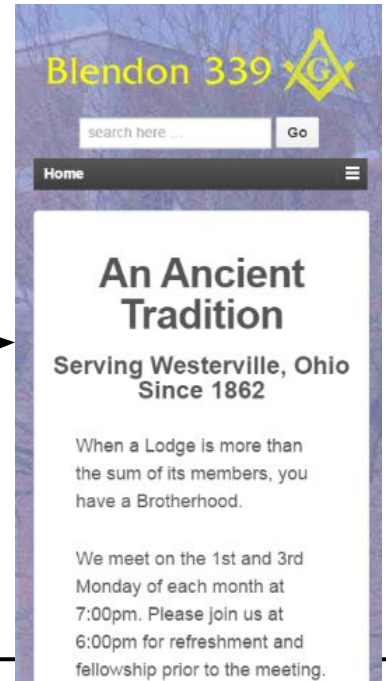
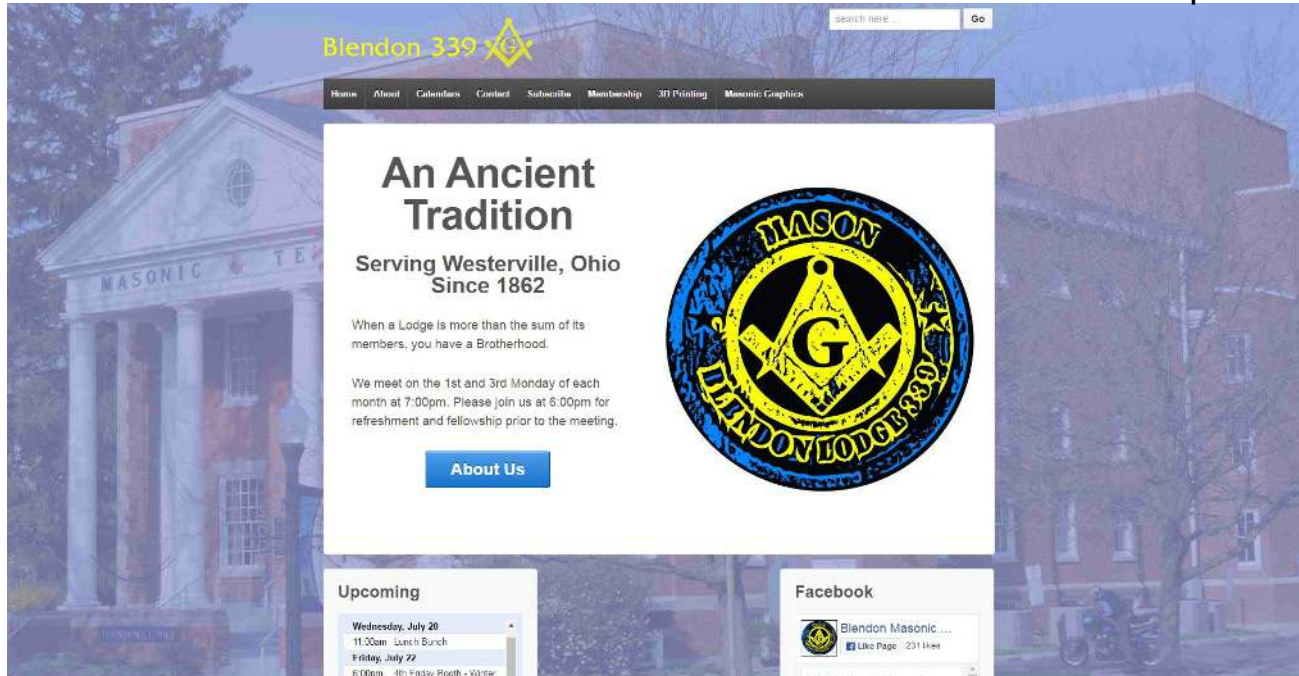
- Ensure your website can be reasonably used by a mobile device such as smartphones or tablets
 - This is as easy as pulling out a phone and browse around your website
 - How easy is it to get around? Do things work/look properly?
- Mobile-device browsing is **on a sharp climb**, it will only grow
- If your website just doesn't work on a mobile device, it can reflect poorly on the user's experience, that vital first impression

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Desktop/Laptop vs Smartphone

Desktop view

Mobile view

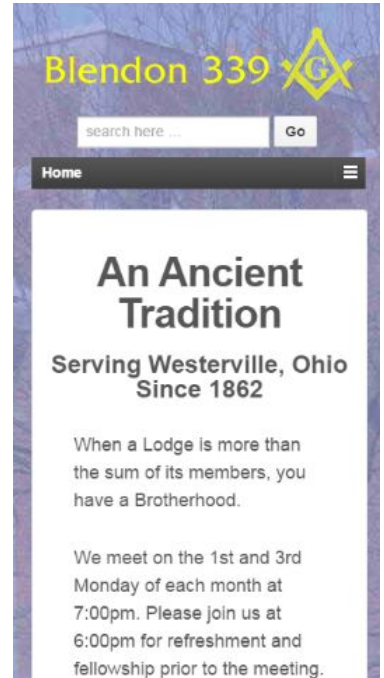


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Mobile Design

- What you see on the right is blendon339.com “shrunk” to fit a smart phone’s screen, menu and all
- This is done automatically by the WordPress theme of
 - <https://cyberchimps.com/responsive-theme>
 - There are many, many other options out there, both free and paid available on <https://wordpress.org/themes/>

Mobile view



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Homepage

- Don't overload your homepage with a mile+ of text to read, slice & dice your website's content
- Publish your meetings and event times, somewhere
 - **Do not** tell visitors to email the secretary to get upcoming dates/times
 - Why make it harder for John Q Public to find you?
 - Don't want to continually update a webpage with meeting or event dates/times? Automate things!
 - <http://www.freemasonmarketing.com/internet-marketing/automate-things/>

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Social Media

- I'll assume you have a social media infrastructure established already...
- If you don't, or even if you do please look at <http://www.freemasonmarketing.com/internet-marketing/social-media/>

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Social Media

- Social media on your homepage can be infinitely useful
- You look alive
- Members, petitioners, the larger public, etc can easily see your current activity and even subscribe to you
 - Publish a feed of your Facebook, Twitter, etc accounts
 - However I wouldn't recommend more than one social media feed published on your homepage (clutter)

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Wrap Up

You've got enough to be dangerous.

If a rising tide lifts all boats, I hope these notions have an impact on national membership.

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Wrap Up

Stay tuned to [Freemasonmarketing.com](https://freemasonmarketing.com), there are more pages and lessons on there than I'd care to include in this document.

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Brethren, go forth and be mighty.

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