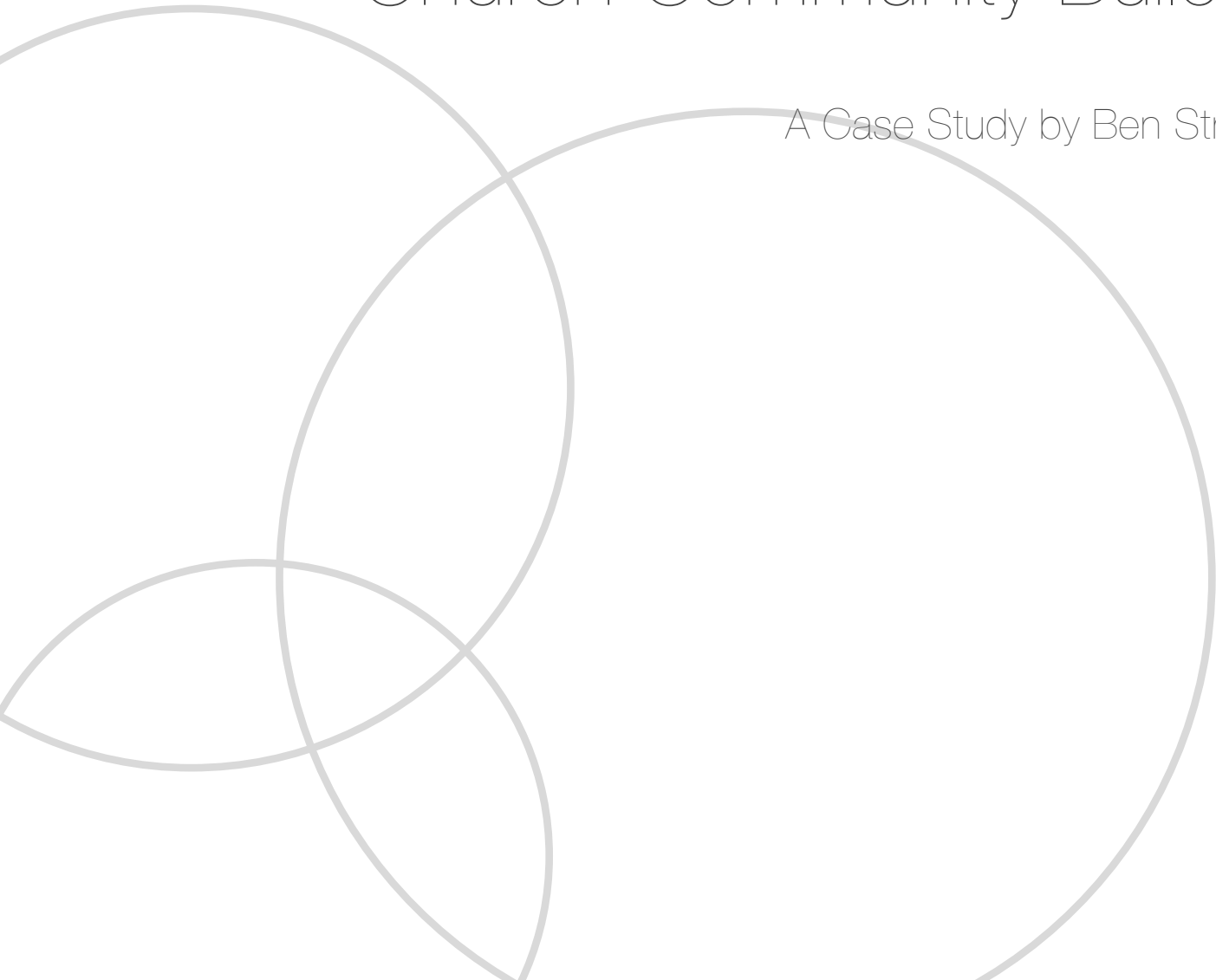CHURCH COMMUNITY BUILDER

Churches Improve Ministry Effectiveness During Implementation Process With Church Community Builder

A Case Study by Ben Stroup

Summary

While implementing Church Community Builder as their primary tool for membership management, three churches experienced measurable improvement in their ministry effectiveness. Largely, this was due to the thorough discovery and ministry mapping process delivered by Church Community Builder coaches as a part of the company's optional Custom Implementation service.

Participating Churches

Forest Hill Church (Charlotte, NC) *www.foresthill.org*

Port City Community Church (Wilmington, NC) *www.portcitychurch.org*

Sunridge Community Church (Temecula, CA) *www.sunridgechurch.org*

Technology will never replace relationships as the core building block of healthy churches. However, technology offers churches strategic insights into how those relationships are formed and how those relationships can be maximized for greater Kingdom impact. Growing churches often turn to their church management software (ChMS) to help them manage and measure the systems that support their ministry. What leaders often underestimate is the value of the software implementation process.

Almost every church dreads implementing a new church management system. Dave Bair, leader of the Church Coaching Team at Church Community Builder, says, "Implementation is not a word most people use outside the executive boardroom or the professionals who are responsible for such activity. Implementation is the period of time that bridges two stages: 'I've made my decision to move forward with you' to 'We are successfully running and using your software.' The implementation journey is different every time.

"There are obviously some conventional best practices which apply, but every church is unique, so we adapt certain elements of our process to align with that uniqueness."

The purpose of this case study is to highlight three churches that improved the health of their ministry as a direct result of the implementation process defined and managed by Church Community Builder. Each church achieved greater clarity about the health of the systems and processes that support their church. The implementation process empowered them to name, define, and modify existing systems and processes.

The Implementation Process

After choosing Church Community Builder as their church management system, Adam Hicks, director of operations at Port City Community Church in Wilmington, North Carolina, was committed to making this process a success. Hicks says, "Our church never connected software with how we did church before. We wanted to make sure we did it right."

Hicks was impressed that the company assigned him a specific Implementation Coach who didn't start with the software, but with identifying their present systems and processes. "The implementation process didn't start with 'here's how to use our software', but with 'how can we help you understand how to do church better?'" Hicks says.

He recounts the process beginning with a definition of how Port City did church. "Our coach assigned a project timeline and facilitated strategic conversations based on potential improvements in our core ministry processes," Hicks says. "Their feedback was consistent throughout."

Bob Santy, Pastor of Business and Finance at Sunridge Church in Temecula, California, didn't know where to begin. He says, "We knew what we needed to accomplish, but without the implementation coaches at Church Community Builder, we might never have fully benefited from all the functionality the software has to offer." Santy's primary concern was laying a great technological foundation to help them continue to build and grow a healthy church.

"Church Community Builder lowered our level of anxiety about the implementation process by assigning a specific coach to work with our church," says Nick Dusenbury, Director of Finance at Forest Hill Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. He wanted to maximize this opportunity, and his coach's timeline clearly defined each step. Dusenbury says, "It was very important to have Church Community Builder directly involved in the implementation process and working with our internal administration team. They did that from the beginning."

Improved Systems

Hicks says, "Two systems underdeveloped in our church were online giving — particularly offering recurring gift options — and member assimilation." Port City had never had a software solution that would help them address either of those functions.

Moving people from first-time attendees to fully engaged members meant defining a process that fit Port City and could be explained, measured, and modified based on results. "For the first time, we could measure and validate what was really happening with people who came through the doors of our church," Hicks says.

Santy says, "The implementation process resulted in a plan for assimilation. This is the first time we've been successful with the assimilation process." Sunridge Church is engaging more people during the introductory process and now is confident they know and can document all their first-time guests.

"With our previous solution, we had an ever-increasing problem with duplicate information and limited report-writing capabilities, which meant neither our data nor our reporting could be fully trusted," says Dusenbury. He remembers Church Community Builder challenging their thinking and walking them through different areas they recognized could be improved. "We discovered we had an incomplete assimilation system that wasn't even on our radar screen."

Ministry Impact of Implementation

"We wouldn't have discovered some of our blind spots without Church Community Builder revealing them to us during the implementation process," says Santy. Other improvements included better donation tracking and management as well as tighter integration with their website, which encourages more members to use the software on a regular basis.

"Church Community Builder gave us the ability to turn control of the groups process to the leaders, which made it easier to collect, track, and manage data," says Dusenbury. He also mentioned that they now have a process to track everyone as they move through the different levels of member engagement. Dusenbury says, "We continue to rely on the software to help us evaluate and improve our ministry systems and process as we work toward greater ministry effectiveness."

Similarly to Sunridge and Forrest Hill, Port City improved its assimilation process. "Church Community Builder never forced us into their box," Hicks says. "Instead, they helped Port City define and remap our church processes. We used to have a hands-off approach to assimilation that left the visitor with the responsibility to figure our church out. Now we have a completely new system and process that's helping our church grow in numbers and disciples."

Conclusion

Many churches turn to church management software (ChMS) to help them manage and measure the systems that support their ministry. What they underestimate is the value of the implementation process as an essential path to connecting a church management system with their existing ministry systems and processes.

Steve Caton, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Church Community Builder, says, "There are no secrets after the implementation process is complete. The dating process is over, and now you're married. Surprises will almost definitely come. But somehow in the midst of this sometimes awkward and uncomfortable process, we have the privilege of solidifying the trust churches first gave to us during the evaluation process. We are able to transform the relationship from software vendor to trusted advisor, which makes deeper communication and collaboration possible moving forward."

In the case of these three churches, each one recognized systems and process they could improve. The implementation process helped them recognize what wasn't working as well as define a new process that could be managed, measured, and modified using technology. The ministry results validated the collaborative work between Church Community Builder and the church.

Caton concludes, "Implementation is a necessary evil. It is also an opportunity to forge a lasting partnership. Our goal is the latter every time."

Ben Stroup is a freelance writer, blogger, and consultant who specializes in topics related to church leadership, giving, communications, and technology. He posts regularly on The Content Matrix *(www.thecontentmatrix.com)* and can be reached at *ben@benstroup.com*.