

Meagan Ranson ([00:02](#)):

Welcome to the church field podcast, insanely practical conversations with real pastors and real church leaders to equip you to lead healthy and growing churches. Before we get started, we have our partner glue here, hanging out with us today. So we wanted to take a moment to let them tell you what they're all about. Thanks Megan and hatred leaders. Super excited to be hanging out with you all on the podcast today. So we've been working with glue for a little while now. Can you tell us really quickly, like, Ooh, glue is absolutely we're a tech company based in Boulder, Colorado, and our mission is to serve the champion above all else. So we call the churches and the organizations that we partner with champions because you champion the growth of others. So first of all, thank you so much for everything you do to serve our communities as leaders, especially during this time. That's awesome. How can church feel podcast listeners learn more about glue for sure. Just head over to [glue.us](#). We have tons of free resources available, and plus, if you want to check out insights plus new church fuel users can use the code blue 10 CF for a 10% discount. That's awesome. So once again, that code is glue 10 C F. Yep. That's correct. Looking forward to listening to the podcast.

Meagan Ranson ([01:34](#)):

Hey, what's up, everybody. Welcome to season two of the church field podcast. I'm your host, Megan Ranson. And we have been talking about how to reach people online and it is not impossible to grow your church by reaching people online. And this season, we want to bring you the best tools and the tips to do just that. And today I'm going to have a conversation with Jason Hamrock of missional marketing to talk about creating a local search strategy. Jason, how are you?

Jason Hamrock ([01:59](#)):

I'm doing great, Megan. I can't complain.

Meagan Ranson ([02:03](#)):

I'm so glad to have you on here,

Jason Hamrock ([02:05](#)):

But glad to be a part of it. So thanks for inviting me.

Meagan Ranson ([02:08](#)):

Yeah, of course. Can you just give us a quick highlight for our listeners in case they don't know who you are, missional marketing is and what is it you do there?

Jason Hamrock ([02:15](#)):

Sure. Well, I, I get to I'm the acting CEO, so I get to lead our company, but we've got some great talented people that really lead missional marketing in. And we're so blessed because we get to work with churches all day long and that's just a passion of ours. And the, in the space of what we do with our churches is we want to help them grow. We want to reach unchurched people so they can get connected to a, their local church, your local church and find Jesus really that's, that's ultimately what we want, what we want to have happen happen. And so we've decided really, you know, in the lane that we serve with churches, it's all about digital tools using digital tools to go deep and reaching more and more. And so we feel like a big job of ours or, you know, one of those, one of those things burdens, that's been on our hearts as we really want to teach and educate and equip churches. So they

understand like how Google really works, right? So that they can go do something about it. Right. And that's just really what our passion is.

Meagan Ranson ([03:16](#)):

Well, that's the re the way the rest of the world is functioning, right? They want to find something out. They want to learn something. They want to know where something's at or how to do it. They go to Google or they go to YouTube. And so we should be showing up there because we got good stuff to share.

Jason Hamrock ([03:30](#)):

We've got the best stuff to share. Megan, we have the best stuff. Yep, exactly. You're absolutely right. Because we know who he is. Right.

Meagan Ranson ([03:39](#)):

Now, before we dive into how to optimize local SEO, can you share with me what you're seeing in churches that are actually like really focusing on this? Like what, what does that look like in, in, in like what happens because we're doing it

Jason Hamrock ([03:51](#)):

Well, when it, I mean, yeah, there's several different things we're gonna talk about today. But when it comes to like the local SEO, I'm going to talk a little bit about it and I'm going to explain it to you and I show you what you need to do. You're literally going to be able to look at your dashboard and go, Hmm, wow. We're getting you more exposure. More people are clicking to our, go to our website. More people are calling us more people are, are clicking on directions to our church, right? More people are working at our reviews and writing reviews. That is evidence that this, this stuff works. You know? And when you talk about the Google search side, even more proof because analytics and data is everything. That's what we stare on to say, is this working or not? Right.

Meagan Ranson ([04:29](#)):

Right now there's two different kinds of SEO. There's like the big picture SEO. And then there's local SEO. Can you talk to us about the difference between those two and why we're focusing specifically today on the local part?

Jason Hamrock ([04:39](#)):

Yeah. That's a great point. So their, their local SEO has everything to do with your brick and mortar location. Okay. It's local. It's, it's, it's all about local. Like, so you've done this before you searched for like you know, pizza joints near me or restaurants near me, or, you know, car dealers near me, whatever my you're looking for. Something near you. Right.

Meagan Ranson ([05:02](#)):

I just searched for burgers near me and I had a delicious burger for lunch today.

Jason Hamrock ([05:07](#)):

That's awesome. Yes. That's just what we do. We Google it, right? Yeah. Church is no different people search for churches near me. Well, when that happens that, that, that gets what's called a Google local

pack. You get that list. You get that map with three search results. Okay. I'm going to go into details about that, but that's local SEO search engine optimization, local SEO. That's different from what's called on page SEO on page. SEO is, has everything to do with your website, all the content on your website, all the metadata on your website, you know, the structure of your website. And I can speak into a little bit of both, but they are two different things. And what I do is I always tell her, I go, Hey, just Google, you know churches near me. Right? And you do that in a Google search result. You're going to see that map with three search results. That's the Google local pack. That's the local SEO. If you scroll a bit further down, you're going to get all the organic. Usually there's 10 on a page. You're going to get those organic search results right underneath that. There's 10 of them. That's on page SEO. And that's the

Meagan Ranson ([06:13](#)):

Difference. One is more important than the other.

Jason Hamrock ([06:16](#)):

Yes. well, they're both important, but if churches are trying to grow their church and reach more people on a local SEO by hands down is critically important for you to show up in the Google local pack. And here's why out of everybody that does internet searches, any kind of internet searches in a search engine, Google gets 92% of those searches. So nine out of 10 people use Google. Only one person uses like being or Yahoo or duck, duck go. Exactly. Exactly. So we're talking, okay. So this is Google's world. We're talking about now, when somebody is doing a local search, their churches near me, or non-denominational churches near me, Christian churches near me, or best churches in my city. You there's all kinds of search terms for people looking for a church. When somebody gets to the local pack, seven out of 10 times, they click on that map, those top three search results, or even maybe an ad that's above that seven out of 10 times only three. Yeah. It's only three out of 10 times. Do they scroll down to the organic search results? We're conditioned to do this.

Meagan Ranson ([07:24](#)):

Yeah. We want what's on top and we want to see it fast. And we don't want to just, we don't want to keep looking for it.

Jason Hamrock ([07:29](#)):

Exactly. And you know what happens if you click on one of those top three search results, you go to Google maps. So now you click on that. Now you're on Google maps where that business is. Let's say, it's your church that businesses Google my business profile shows up. I mean, go do it. But you just pause this podcast, go do that. Goo churches near me. Find, just click on all of those churches. And the next thing you're going to see is that Google my business, or what's called a knowledge panel about that business or this in this case, that church. And that's over Google maps.

Meagan Ranson ([08:04](#)):

Yeah. You know, I found something really interesting when I was researching our conversation today, I read an article that said that 45% of online shoppers, they visit a store online before they walk into the brick and mortar stores. 45% of people look online and then go to the brick and mortar store. And that interesting. I was like, wow, that's a lot. That's a lot higher than I would have expected. Which just told me about how important local SEO is,

Jason Hamrock ([08:30](#)):

You know? And, and when you're, so let's talk about restaurants. I live in the Phoenix area. I love to take my wife out on date nights. And we, we like to try different stuff. And so, you know what I do when I'm looking for different restaurants, I'd never been to, I Google them. Right. I Google like best restaurants. And you know what? I look at what you do, the same thing. You look at reviews and photos. What are you trying to say about it? And does the food look good? Church is no different. Yeah. To the point where I, I always tell churches, Hey, it's no longer that your website is the front porch to your, to your church. Your website is not the front porch to your church anymore. It's really like the living room. The front porch is Google my business or Facebook or Yelp. Yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([09:12](#)):

So we need to be paying attention to that Google business profile, making sure that we're getting good quality content photos on there that we're asking for. Do you recommend asking for reviews? Like how do we grow that and improve it?

Jason Hamrock ([09:23](#)):

Absolutely. Yes. 100%. We, we so avoid this. I, you know, I, I get it cause we're busy, but I gotta tell you everybody, Google is paying attention. They know if you're getting reviews or not. If you're not getting reviews, what does that say? You must not be. You're not important. You're not a growing organization. You're not a growing business. Hello. We've got people sitting in there are well used to sit in our pews or our seats. Right. Some do now. Yeah. Those are your best reviewers. Like ask people to write a review, right? Ask them to go to Google, to write a review. And there's Google makes it easy for you to do that. But getting, I would say getting like three to five to seven reviews a month, if you can, would be amazing. That just informs Google. You're a growing business. And you said this earlier a second, Megan, you said adding photos. Absolutely. Yeah. If you just Google, Hey church, go Google your name. Look at your Google. My business profile. Would you go to your church by what you see in photos and reviews, right? Probably not. So go take care of that. Add photos, add a video, add, add several videos because people look at that, right?

Meagan Ranson ([10:33](#)):

So all those beautiful pictures you have on your social media pages and that you have on your website, copy and paste them right there and do your business profile.

Jason Hamrock ([10:40](#)):

Exactly. Google my business profile. Absolutely log in and do it. You have to do it.

Meagan Ranson ([10:46](#)):

Google my business. Doesn't that? Give you to leave reviews. You can just copy and paste your URL to leave a review, right?

Jason Hamrock ([10:52](#)):

Yeah. When you log into the back end of your Google, my business, if you've never done that, when you Google your name, you're going to see a little thing that says own this business with a question, Mark, click on that. And it'll tell you if somebody, yeah. If you have, if nobody's claimed it, it'll just walk you through the steps. Okay? Yeah. That's easy. If it has been claimed, it'll say, Hey, somebody with this email, they'll show you a little port, a little portion of that email to know that somebody actually claimed it. Right? But once you log in, you're now you're looking at your, you know, your basically your Google,

my business admin panel, you can do all kinds of stuff. Then you can respond to reviews. You want to respond to every review, good, bad, or ugly, respond to it, respond to it.

Meagan Ranson ([11:31](#)):

Don't hide the negative ones. What do you do with those? Cause I see a lot of people wanting to hide their negative reviews.

Jason Hamrock ([11:35](#)):

No, you don't want to hide. Cause I mean, if, if, if you get negative reviews, then there's probably a problem. If there's, if it's ongoing, I usually see like one or maybe two respond to him saying, Hey, I'm so sorry that you had to experience. You know, I'd love to talk with you and we'd like to write the wrong, if that was our fault. And we love you. We care about you. Like, if you're say that in a, in a response to a review, you know what other people are reading that, thank you care. Right? If you don't respond. Hm. They must not really care about the negative reviews at that church. I think I'll go to the next one.

Meagan Ranson ([12:05](#)):

Absolutely. So we've talked a little bit about Google, my business and the high level of what to do with that. What other tools do you recommend to use to improve local SEO?

Jason Hamrock ([12:14](#)):

Yeah. So when it comes to local SEO, there's really three things. We just mentioned. The two of them add reviews and add photos all day long and make sure that it's, you know, that if you're a multi-campus church, you have multi basically multicultural my business profiles. Cause you have multiple storefronts, right? Each storefront has its thing. Another thing that you could do is, and you probably could go to our website, go to missional marketing.com and you can type it. You can click on local SEO and we'll run a report. It'll be a report. That'll show you it'll audit your G your your citation was called your citation listings. So this is the deal. You have a name, Adderson phone. Okay. Your church's name, address, and phone. That nap name Adderson phone needs to be accurate and not only Google, but all the other different directories on the internet.

Jason Hamrock ([13:05](#)):

There's literally thousands of directories truth. Be told, Google cares. And they look at about 300 or so of them. And you want to be accurate. A lot of times those directory listings are just missing a church. Hasn't added a directory listing or it's wrong. Maybe they changed their name or they moved. And when that's the case, Google has a little bit of hesitancy of putting you up in the local pack. Cause that's the goal be in that local pack for your zip code and all around you. Well, when they see that your citations are in order and your name, address, and phone is perfect, they have a lot of confidence puts you in local back. Cause that confirms you're open for business and you're in this spot. And that's what Google cares about.

Meagan Ranson ([13:47](#)):

I ask a really nitpicky kind of probably silly question, but it's something that I see churches do completely different all across the board. When it comes to your business hours, do you recommend what hours your office is open? Like a nine to five, your service times because we're church, you know, depending on the way that churches ran, you might not, you might have these really obscure hours or you might be

a two man band. Right. And you don't, you don't have a nine to five. So do you put your, your, what do you recommend for that? Like what does one of them perform better than the other is one more clear?

Jason Hamrock ([14:20](#)):

Yeah. Be honest. If you're, if you're renting us out of school, I don't know who's doing that these days, but let's say, you know, before COVID you were you're only really open on Sunday morning, right? That's your business hours. You're. Now, if you have another office space, then you might have a separate Google my business profile for that office space. But you know what? I think it's the idea is when somebody is looking for a church, they're typically looking for who's open on a Sunday morning. Cause that's kind of, I want to go check them out. Right. And the goal of that is just to get them over to your website. But you know, you can't, you can't, you don't want to bend the truth. I don't want to say lie, but you don't want to bend the truth by saying we're hoping when you're not really open. So just keep your, keep your hours of operation. Honest.

Meagan Ranson ([15:03](#)):

That makes sense. That makes total sense. Yep. Sorry. That was a weird question. I know. Okay. So we're, we're digging into Google my business a little bit. Do you want to touch on Google ad grants?

Jason Hamrock ([15:16](#)):

Oh my goodness. Yes. So, so you know, when people are searching, right? I call those ringing to people. They're looking for a church ring, ring. One. People are people who already go to your church. So ring one, they go to your church, ring two, I'm looking for a church. So I'm using the Google tools, right? Google they're searching church churches near me. Now the Google ad grant, you guys probably heard about the ad grant. If you haven't go Google it or go to our website and learn all about it, right? That's where Google will give a nonprofit, a five Oh one C3 nonprofit up to \$10,000.

Meagan Ranson ([15:55](#)):

Say that's so much money.

Jason Hamrock ([15:58](#)):

Google will become one of your largest donors to your church. They will.

Meagan Ranson ([16:03](#)):

So there's a lot of complexity to that Google ad grant situation.

Jason Hamrock ([16:06](#)):

Well, and here's the deal you're talking about Google search, Google search ads. Right? So what I, what I love about Google search ads is not only can it reach those ring to people. It also is phenomenal to reach ring three people, three people ring, three people are people that are looking for help with a felt need. Okay. So how to fix my marriage, how to overcome a divorce, how to deal with an addiction. You know how to deal with finances, how to raise a team, you know, who is Jesus, like how to be forgiven and on and on and on and on and on. There's a there's, you know, thousands and thousands of felt need searches that we, the church have answers for. Right? We absolutely know answers to these. The problem is we don't have content on our website and we're not even going after those ring, three people get they're all around you. And so

Meagan Ranson ([16:58](#)):

That's so interesting. And I think that's something that we should be focusing on a lot more because you know, it's no, it's not like any, any news to any of us. That church attendance is on the decline. But I, I don't think that people are less interested in spiritual things. I don't think people don't, you know, are less interested in things that are going to improve their lives or make their lives better. It's just that we need to be better at showing up for them.

Jason Hamrock ([17:22](#)):

And then, you know what it's it's right now, here we are in November of 2020. And you know, we've had a rough year, right. A lot know election and COVID, and it's just

Meagan Ranson ([17:36](#)):

Fine. Everything's fine. It's fine.

Jason Hamrock ([17:41](#)):

I tell you what, when you go to look at like what's trending in Google typically, you know, further there's some stuff that always moves around when it is the top trending things, but what is just up into the right? It's been like this for a long time now is stress, anxiety, worry. You know, these, these huge felt needs. People are just hurting right now. And so we, we love working with churches and we actually have a really cool path to help a church take to, to build landing pages so that they can actually reach people that are dealing with stress, worry, anxiety. I'm telling you this stuff works because we've been doing it. So we've been using the Google ad grant and it's, it's on, Google's dime that they're running ads for local churches around those kinds of keywords. And we're driving traffic to that. Church's webpage to talk about how to deal with stress or worry and anxiety. As an example, there's so many more because people are dealing with this stuff and we have, we have solutions we know who can help them. There's just a huge disconnect because churches don't talk

Meagan Ranson ([18:45](#)):

Well, like you said, we have the best answer out there. We do. And we just did an episode with Brian Buford about church's using a history, choosing webinars to grow their church. And their webinars are all around, felt needs. They're sponsored by his church, but they're not branded his church. They're just felt needs to reach the community, how to deal with virtual online school and how to like dealing with stress and anxiety and working from home and you know, just stuff that we really need to talk about that people really need to hear the support that they're looking for. The church is showing up in that space, the same way that, you know, a business mind.

Jason Hamrock ([19:22](#)):

Exactly. And so like, that's an amazing podcast, like, like how to talk to your kids about race, right? Every parent would want some NOL, a . I probably need to address this. Right. But here's the deal having a podcast is one thing I love it. But taking that podcast and transcribe it in and adding that content on a page that Google can crawl will then inform Google. Oh, you must be an authority in the subject matter because Google can't crawl a video on your website. Yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([19:50](#)):

Right. I am. I am. I wish you could see how like I am, how much I am nodding my head right now. Yeah.

Jason Hamrock ([19:58](#)):

Yeah. That's so great. So, so I, I just, I cheer on you, keep talking, keep informing us about what you have to say, what the Bible says about these issues, but Hey, web team, take that, transcribe it, create a page and boom it in, you know, make sure the meta description is all in line. The URL, there's an H one, you've got, you know, images named properly, but you've got that content in the form of text on that page. And I'll tell you what you do that, Oh boy, Google will run that Google ad grant. Like it'll be a great campaign for you.

Meagan Ranson ([20:30](#)):

And there are so many great, easy places out there that can do transcription for you. Like rev is a really great service and it's super easy. Just takes a couple minutes. And you have automatically, you have your whole videos transcribed. You don't have to spend hours writing it out. Yeah,

Jason Hamrock ([20:44](#)):

That's right. No, don't do that. Do that.

Meagan Ranson ([20:48](#)):

Listen, I know people who have done that, so I'm just going to throw it out there

Jason Hamrock ([20:52](#)):

Like a volunteer, you know, that's cool. But you know, it it's, it's not like you Stonex is an S O N I X that's another one you got to pay a little bit of money, right? Yeah. But that's okay. I mean, it's so worth it. I'm telling you that you get so much juice from that when you add that to a page. Yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([21:06](#)):

For sure. So what, how much time do you think you need to spend on optimizing local SEO? What does that look like in our work schedule and building that into our workflow?

Jason Hamrock ([21:15](#)):

Wow. Well, you know, going after the citation somewhat. Yeah. That's, that's like when we do it for churches, because, you know, we make it really affordable. We just do it for churches. You know, it's a year long project because we're, we're getting into some of the aggregators and we're, we're responding to the, you know, the, the, the directory of the citation when it comes in. It's just stuff we do. It's, it's, it's quite a bit of work. I'd say probably, you know, an hour or two or three hours a week. You really also though, you gotta clean up your Google maps, you got to put effort into it, you know, create a video, a welcome video. Hey, thanks so much for checking us out on, on Google here. We'd love to invite you to our church, blah, blah, blah. Add those videos to your Google, my business profile and add photos and ask for reviews. So that's stuff that the church can do. You know, we, we, well, we can do that, but we really recommend the church owns that, you know? And that's you save money when you do it that way,

Meagan Ranson ([22:07](#)):

They just added a Google photo on a Google review for my church. And I got over 300 views in 24 hours. Wow. I was shocked. Like, that's a lot of views in 24 hours for a local church. Still. Like those numbers

are out there. People are looking then and now more than ever, people are looking for something to, I hope to look for, you know,

Jason Hamrock ([22:27](#)):

That's right. Yeah. We're seeing all kinds. I mean, there's not as many people obviously looking for a brick and mortar location right now than a year ago. Right. But it's starting to go off in a different that connection. Yeah. It's different parts of it. Like if you're in Cal like California, like we got a lot of churches who serve in California, the numbers are just down of, because everything's locked down, you're going to, I don't know, Texas or somewhere else. It's, it's different. Right. In Arizona, you can have more people show up. Now that's starting to actually change a little

Meagan Ranson ([22:55](#)):

Ex-US everything's different in Texas. We always pick on them. They're big enough. They can take it though. Yeah, that's right. That's right. So I know that was a really big ambiguous question about how much time you need to spend on local SEO. But the point is that you just need to at least pay attention to your business profile. Make sure to keep that up to date, get three to four rides out. You thought it said three to four reviews a month to keep that going and fresh and active. Is there anything else that you would add for our optimizing local SEO that we need to know?

Jason Hamrock ([23:29](#)):

No, that's, that's kind of like you just mentioned, that's says here's the deal. We always pay a lot attention to Facebook and rightfully so, but not everybody's on Facebook. And you know, you're only reaching your audience. You're ring one typically, and you might be reaching a little bit of ring too, but I got to tell you if somebody's Googling you and they're checking you out, we actually, there's a thing called discovery searches. This is what's really cool in Google, Google my business. You can know if somebody is trying to discover a church or a direct search, if it's a direct search, they're directly typing in your name. If they're discovering their discovery, they're like, you know, you're not popping up. They're just typing in churches, near me. That is low hanging fruit of people looking for a church. And you do not want to make that like the red headed stepchild over here in the corner, that is almost as important as Facebook. It is that important. I'm telling you it's that important and more and more people use Google. We know this and Google owns the space.

Meagan Ranson ([24:24](#)):

Right, right. Yeah. No, that's super great. Well, thank you so much, Jason, for sharing all your wisdom about local SEO and again, check out missional marketing. They do really great things for the church and you guys are really awesome and super effective at what you do. And I really, really appreciate your wisdom here.

Jason Hamrock ([24:40](#)):

Well, Megan, thanks. I, we we'd love, we get to do, we, we felt like, you know, we worked in churches and we felt like, you know, we need to equip ourselves and keep equipping ourselves. Cause this stuff constantly changes right there. Google and Facebook, all these guys constantly evolve and constantly changing. Well, we have to pay attention to it so we can then serve the churches by educating and equipping them.

Meagan Ranson ([25:00](#)):

Yeah, it's a, it is a full-time job just to keep up with all of the things that are changing for sure.

Jason Hamrock ([25:05](#)):

We, it is, we've got a, we've got a team that their eyes are focused on. What's next?

Meagan Ranson ([25:09](#)):

Yeah. That's awesome. That's awesome. Well, thanks so much. And thank you for listening to Churchville podcast. We'll see you next week.

Meagan Ranson ([25:17](#)):

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