2012 Spiritual Living Convention
Maximizing Your Audience on a Minimal Budget:
Using the Web to Get Your Message Out

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This is the perfect time!

There has never been a time that getting your word out was so inexpensive. There has never been a time when the global audience was more reachable. And, there has never been a time when the world was so primed for spiritual awakening.

Like everything, the internet is just Spirit in activity. The Energy and Intelligence moving through the internet is unlimited – and it is yours to use. Now is the time to develop your web-consciousness to make use of this unlimited resource to let the world know who you are and how to find you. The world is ready and the power of the internet is waiting to say yes to you.

The intention of this handbook is to provide ideas for affordable entry-level options to get you started with your internet marketing. It is directed to the not-so-techie audience. With just a little information, anyone can quickly start *NET*working, working the net to promote your center and offerings.

The resources that are presented in this handout are far from comprehensive. However, with these few readily available options, even the smallest of organizations can be heard and seen by hundreds, thousands, and potentially millions of people.

This handbook presents various means by which you can promote your gifts to the world via the internet with little or no hard costs. It offers a brief overview of vehicles and example solutions. This presentation provides a panoramic glimpse of the economical marketing potential of internet resources. It is not our intention to endorse any companies or products although some are specifically addressed.

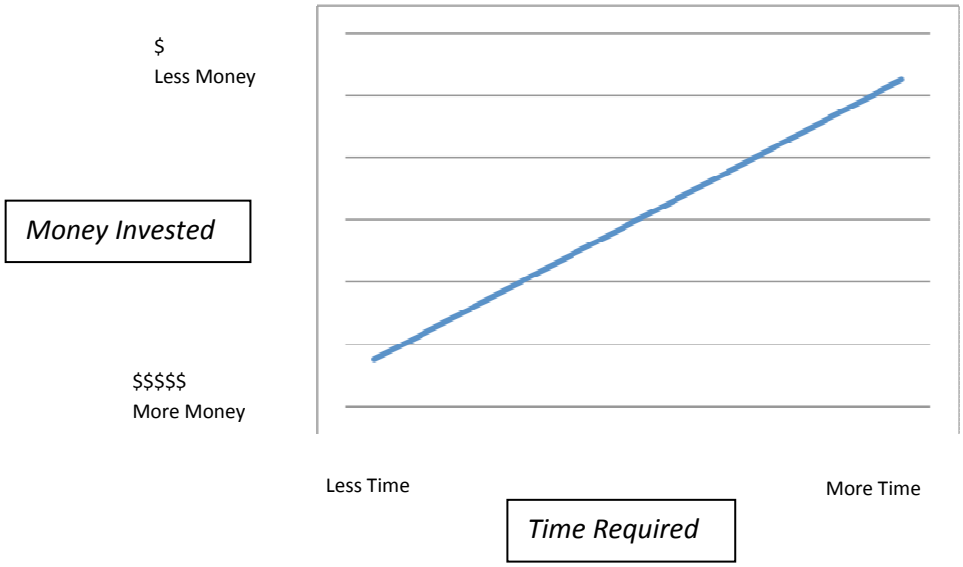
For ease of presentation, we have organized the information in the following categories:

- Websites
- "Turfing the Net" – our way of saying reaching people on their own virtual turf
- Media Options – using video and audio resources
- Other communication tools – tools and utilities by which you can automate and manage communication with your audience
- Webinars
- Special Custom Apps

But first, a few thoughts –

With any project, if you ask an expert in that field, "What can you do for me?" the reply will likely be, "How much money do you have?" Internet marketing falls perfectly into that model. There are two other questions that also come into play: "What is your technical aptitude?" and "How much time do you have?" We might also add the question, "What are you willing to dedicate to this?" Time and money are definitely resources that are required for internet marketing but an even better resource is *a sense of adventure.* Play with it.

In approaching the question of time and money, consider this: there is an inverse pattern between *Time Required* and *Money Invested*. Graphically, it would look something like this.



This translates to: The more money you spend, the less time you will need to dedicate to the activity. The diagonal line shows the pattern. Somewhere along that diagonal line is your *sweet spot*, the place wherein you find the optimal return for the use of your time and money investments. Regardless of how much money you spend on equipment and services, your time and attention is essential to the success of your marketing. Like with anything you undertake, your vision and your consciousness are its engine.

Now, let's dive in.

Websites

Your website is more than your face to the world, it is your identity. It is the central location for all your offerings. You may have other web presences but your website is the switch point to everything. However, it doesn't have to be complex or high tech, it just needs to be a well-proofed, functioning projection of who you are. The wow factor is cool but authenticity and grooming go a long way to convey who you are and what you offer.

Getting started with a basic website does not have to be expensive. All you need is a domain name, a hosting service, content, and someone to put it all together – oh, and your most important resources: vision and time.

Domain Name: This is your internet address or URL (Uniform Resource Locator), such as www.MYCSL.org. This is licensed through a provider. Licensing can be for a year, multiple years, or a lifetime depending on how much you are ready to spend. The longer the term, the better the deal. There are countless providers, all with different prices and packages.

Hosting Service: This is the location where your website data will physically reside. You are essentially renting space on their server and using their infrastructure to house and transport your website over the internet. There are a range of services available beyond the most basic of hosting your website. They include expanded sizing for data, email accounts, support for multiple websites, security certificate for online sales transactions, and more. They may even offer a content management system with templates and graphical images so that you can create your own simple website without being a technical guru.

Content: This is where the invaluable resources of time and vision come in. This is what your site looks like and what it says about you. Plan out what you want to present. Research other sites for ideas. Gather images that communicate what you want people to know about you. This is an ongoing activity because you want to keep your site fresh. Consider putting together a web team from within your organization and distributing the responsibility for various parts of your site – such as, Education, Youth, Products, etc. Also think of the keywords or key phrases that people may use to find what you have to offer. Include those in your site, particularly in the page titles. This information will be submitted to search engines such as Google so that you can be easily found.

Someone to put it all together: Someone or a team with technical know-how will be needed to turn your content vision into a working website – webmaster(s). You may have the resources internally. If not, there are many persons and companies offering their technical services for a price. In either case, you want to maintain control over and access to your site. Make sure you are the main contact for the hosting provider so that you can maintain authorized access to your site. In addition to creating and updating your site, there are other technical activities that you will want to consider. Do you want to monitor traffic to your site to see who is viewing you? Are you going to accept payments or donations via the site (Secure Socket Layer Certificate [SSL])? Do you want site monitoring and optimization to assure that you maximize your audience (Search Engine Optimization [SEO])? There are many optional activities but they may be more

than you constructively need. If you contract with a webmaster, how much you spend does not necessarily indicate the value you will receive. Start small and simple – you can always expand.

NOTE: To get a head start, Centers for Spiritual Living offer templates that are developed in Joomla (a website development application) that contain all CSL branding. They also offer hosting services.

"Turfing the Net"

This is what we call using social networking – getting to people on their own turf. Word of mouth is recognized to be most effective means of promotion, and social media sites, such as Facebook, are the new word of mouth. Why? Because it is personal – people connecting with people. Today with the ease of communication, that feeling of connection is very flexible. When you are looking for a product or service, do you like to hear about the experience and recommendations of people you know? People are keeping in contact now via social media options. Whether they are friends or relatives living in distant locations or the same household, electronic communications are often a means of keeping up with each other. Now also, people who have never met each other in person have connection and regular communication via the internet. Because of this expansion of connectedness through social media you may be in Cincinnati but knowledge of you may be in China. That distance between Cincinnati and China is no longer measured in miles but in milliseconds. It isn't far-fetched to think that someone in your area will connect with someone at a great physical distance and be informed about you.

Facebook (facebook.com) Cost: free
Facebook is certainly not the only application for social networking but it is currently by far the most popular and widely used. A fan page for your center can be a huge vehicle for getting your word out. When you post an item for your many fans, they can then share it with their friends and add their comments, or they can simply "like" it by clicking a button, and their tacit endorsement is then communicated to their friends. You can include photos, videos, and links to webpages. You can also create events and invite your Facebook friends and followers. It is a simple concept and one by which your message can potentially reach many thousands of people in a very short time.

Get your congregation, friends, and family involved. They can like your posts, post quotes from your talks with reference to who you are and where to find you, invite their friends to events, etc. A snowball effect is easily created.

It is recommended that you post a new message every day at a minimum. It is also recommended that you respond to posts and comments by fans as soon as possible, ideally within an hour. This requires a good deal of attention. So, to make the best use of a fan page, more than one administrator is recommended. Your web team would be useful here.

Beyond Facebook, there are a great number of other social networking sites. Some specialize in particular interests or geographic areas. To get a view of other social networking opportunities, visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_networking_websites.

A few are touched upon here as potentially of interest for promoting your center.

Meetup (meetup.com) Cost: "As little as $12 a month"
Meetup provides a means by which people can locate meetings and events in their area that are of their particular interests. Hosts can create a "group" and list their events and classify them by interest, such as "Spirituality". A calendar is created and email notifications are automatically sent to individuals who sign up as "members" of the group regarding scheduled events. This is an outreach tool for locating seekers who may not find you by traditional marketing. The actual costs at this time are: $15 per month for a 3 month membership paid in advance, $12 per month for a 6 month membership paid in advance; and $19 per month for a single month membership. Each membership allows you to create 3 groups.

Yelp (Yelp.com) Cost: Free
Yelp is usually associated with restaurants and other businesses. However, you will find that virtually ALL businesses are listed INCLUDING CHURCHES. Yelp users can post their comments about their experience with a business – good or bad. It is a good idea to take a look at Yelp's listing of your church to see what people may have said and to verify that the contact information is accurate. You can edit the contact details and add information by "claiming" your business and creating a business account. You can then also communicate with the people who comment on your page privately or publicly. Yelp is being mentioned here because of the experience of some friends. One of the first customers of their new personal catering service business posted a positive comment on Yelp without their knowledge. When they get new customers, they ask how the customer heard about them; a large majority of the responses are that they learned about them on Yelp. It is a very effective promotional tool. Take a look and consider inviting your congregants to comment about their spiritual home.

Linked In (linkedin.com) Cost: Free
Linked In is rapidly becoming the professional version of Facebook. Many businesses and business people use it to share information, promote services and products and to advertise or find jobs. It is definitely worth setting up a Linked In page for your senior minister and your community. This may be even more relevant if your target audience is predominantly professional people operating in the corporate environment or running their own businesses. Like Facebook, it is easy to set up pages and profiles; once that is done, invite others to connect with you and start involving yourself in some of the many forums.

Twitter (twitter.com) Cost: Free
Twitter is being mentioned here only because of its seeming ubiquity and questions that are usually asked about its value in marketing. Twitter is, as its name implies, a tool for quick communications to stimulate and maintain excitement. A "tweet" is limited to 140 characters. The general expectation is that communications are frequent to maintain a high interest. Thusly,

it can be a very time demanding tool to employ it properly. Twitter may be useful for certain situations and events but as a general marketing tool it has little practical value.

Blogging Cost: Free
Writing a blog can be a great way to connect with your audience and to create a wider interest in, or introduce new people to, your community. It can be written on an ad-hoc basis or a specific regular basis and you can write about anything. You can also add in feeds from YouTube or other videos, audio clips from musicians or a previous talk, inspirational pictures as well as highlighting your favorite quotes. There are a number of routes to bring your blog to life: blogger; wordpress; tumblr and many smaller specialist services or directly on your website.

The one advantage of having your blog on your own website is *traffic*; search engines find you more easily if you are regularly updating the content of your website. Having a blog on your site does that automatically and thus helps to increase your rating in the search engines.

As with all your marketing and communication efforts, it is wise to be somewhat strategic. If you have events coming up, be sure to mention those in your blogs, theme your content to match in with the current themes in your community and remember, you want people to read and subscribe so make it interesting and valuable. Wherever you set up your blog, ensure that you have a *subscribe* option or RSS button. This allows people to be automatically updated every time you post a new blog or update the content of a blog page. RSS stands for *Really Simple Syndication;* it is part of a software system that automates the delivery of information. You don't need to understand the full detail to use the facility. In most applications it is a selectable option, if it is available, be sure to select it so that all your web family can opt in to be updated.

Media Options
It is simple to promote your center and offerings using media options other than just the written word and still images. Audio and video are very powerful tools. There are numerous media options and tools to get your word out. They can be as simple as placing a link to YouTube video on your website or as complex as operating your own Internet TV station. Starting your own TV station is much easier and probably less expensive that you may imagine. However, for our purposes here, we will stick with the more basic media options for reaching your audience.

Audio Recordings
Recordings of your talks, meditations, or inspirational messages are easily shared on the internet via your website. The two recommended formats for these recordings are MP3 or Podcast. MP3 is the most generic way to offer your files. Any media player device or application can read it. "Podcast" is a generic term for providing this type of content via the internet and it can also refers to a file format that is native to iPods. While most computers can read the iPod format, some devices may not. A Podcast can be downloaded into iTunes, another free program.

"Podcast" is also a service by which this type of file, usually as a series, can is made available via the iTunes store. Interested persons can subscribe to your podcasts and have the files downloaded to their device automatically when they are made available. This is a great way to stay in the minds and hearts of your audience.

Audio files are easily created using some type of digital recording device. The better the equipment, the better the sound. If using a handheld device or a computer, a good quality external microphone is recommended. If necessary, the file type can be converted using software. There are many software applications to choose from for audio recording and editing. Prices vary from free (Audacity, WavePad) to hundreds of dollars.

Video

Video is a highly effective means of getting the full attention of your audience. And now, it is easy and inexpensive to provide video of your message on the internet. One of the most popular and practical means of doing this is YouTube. Another is Vimeo. Both offer free services. The difference between them is generally considered to be that Vimeo is a more geared toward professionals. Each has advantages and drawbacks. If you are looking for free, frequent and somewhat unlimited video sharing, YouTube is your best choice. If appearance is more of concern for you, consider Vimeo. Don't forget you can also have your videos on your website and your facebook page.

Vimeo's basic (free) service has limitations on frequency of uploads and storage space availability. However, an upgrade to their paid subscription of just $60 per year, if paid in advance, gives you more features and eliminates the unsolicited ads to your viewers. YouTube has a 15 minute time limit on videos by default that you have to manually override when you upload your video. It may be annoying but not really limiting.

Both, as well as other internet video sharing services, are fairly easy to use. Uploading video is a somewhat intuitive and quick procedure. If you can make a video, you can be broadcasting on the internet with ease in a matter of minutes.

Sharing Video

Once you have uploaded your video to an internet location from which it can be shared, such as YouTube or Vimeo, you need to let people know how to find it. An automatic way is that you identify key words and other search criteria at the time you upload the video. This information will be picked up by search engines so that internet searches will locate your video. However, direct sharing is your objective. This can be done via your website, email, and social networking sites. Your video can be linked from, or imbedded in, your website and/or social networking pages. This is simple, costless, and priceless delivery of your video message.

Another service that you may consider delivers video content via email. There are a number of companies that do this. One is called Talk Fusion (TalkFusion.com). NOTE: This is a relationship marketing company, otherwise known as multi-level marketing or MLM. You can subscribe to the service simply as a client. It is mentioned here because it does offer quality services. It is an expensive option compared to the previously mentioned options, i.e. free stuff. It is being mentioned here because it is another class of product and the company offers so many other services. Their other services include video conferencing, live broadcasting, and lead capture all of which will be touched upon in this document. Incidentally, this is the company currently being used by Holmes Institute for the delivery of their live classes.

Creating video for Internet Sharing – tips and such

Camera and Audio – It is recommended that you use a camera that has a jack for an external microphone. This better allows you to get quality sound. Visual quality is important but if your message cannot be clearly heard, your efforts are for naught. One of the least expensive, best quality, easy to use cameras is the Cisco Flip. Although it is discontinued you can still buy it from many locations. It offered 2 hours of recording at 8GB of storage and had a handy flip out USB interface with built in software that practically did everything for you, although it does not have the external microphone jack. Another option, which has the external microphone jack, is the Kodak Zi8; this has been superceded but is still widely available.

Background and Visuals – Keep it simple!

- While you want to present a pleasant ambience, you don't want your set to overwhelm your message.
- If you are using props, keep in mind what the camera sees. If an in-person audience won't see it, the camera won't see it either.
- Keep your clothing simple. Internet video quality is not perfect. As you move, those patterns on your clothes can visually move at an awkward rate on transmission. Solid colors are encouraged.

Scripts – If you are doing a strictly promotional video for your center, keep these things in mind:

- The branding survey results that were produced for CSL a few years ago are peppered with key words and ideas that you may want to consider including in your approach.
- Appeal to people's basic emotional/spiritual needs. Everyone wants acceptance and belonging.
- Be authentic. Let them know that you sincerely care for them and want to give them something that is useful in their life.
- Shatter a personal myth or two – give them a new way of looking at their life and the world and let them know that transformation is possible and that your center can offer them the tools for change.
- Consider a personal story or someone else's story that communicates what can be found in your community and/or our philosophy.
- Find a way to communicate that NOW is their time to choose your center.

Internet Radio

Setting-up your own radio station is fairly easy. It can be done with very little equipment and software. The software may even be free. However, the most practical alternative, is have your show(s) "aired" by an existing radio station. For marketing ease, look for one in your area or perhaps one dedicated to spirituality. Fees for broadcasting your work will vary widely from station to station. Consider using sponsors to cover the fees in exchange for advertising. You can also use a streaming service and do your own marketing. This is relatively inexpensive but it may limit your audience exposure and puts the entire marketing burden on you.

You don't need to be anywhere near the "station" to broadcast. All you need is a computer, a high speed internet connection, software, a quality microphone, and a location with little ambient noise – oh, and maybe a gift to gab. ☺ Your studio is your computer.

Your radio show can be performed live or recorded for later playback. If performed live, your computer becomes the broadcast point for the radio station. You can play music or other recorded materials, bring in guests via telephone, and virtually anything that a commercial radio station can do. If you opt to record a show, you can do all that and edit the product prior to playback on the air. You, your station, or any other authorized party can then stream the recording for show time.

NOTE: If you are using music or other recorded materials, you must observe all copyright laws. You will be required to get permission to use the material and/or pay fees for its use.

SHOUTCast, ICECast, and NICECast are examples of software that can be used. A quality microphone may be the most expensive item that you will need. It is recommended that you use a USB microphone that has a mute button, such as a Blue Yeti.

Internet TV

Again, it is amazingly easy to break into internet TV or live streaming video over the internet and it can be really inexpensive or very pricey depending on your budget and desires.

There are many livestreaming services available on the Internet. For our purposes here, we are only going to address one: ustream.tv. You can begin broadcasting your own show or service for virtually free. Ustream offers a free software download that will enable you to broadcast over their service. If you already have a webcam, you're in business.

The quality of your production with this free software is dependent on your investment in hardware and in the appearance of your physical environment. An upgrade to a camcorder with an external microphone will make a huge difference in quality. Refer to the earlier sections on video and audio for ideas on how to improve the quality of your production.

For a small software investment, you can get more sophisticated in your production. You can have features such as using multiple cameras, HD broadcasting, title overlays, and Picture In Picture. With these features, you can be really creative and give a very professional appearance.

With Ustream, you will be doing your own marketing but they do offer a "Spirituality" viewing category so that random viewers may also find your show. The video quality offered by Ustream is excellent and you can't go wrong with the price!

Other communication tools

Lead Capture/Opt-In, Autoresponders, Email Marketing Solutions

One of the essential functions that your website needs to provide is a way for you to build an email marketing list. This is called 'Lead Capture'. To do this you need to have a opt in box where visitors to your website can join by entering their name and email address. It is usual to offer some kind of exchange for doing this, like a free e-course or inspirational audio. Once you capture the information you can then start an email marketing campaign. There are many services that offer a solution for this; here are a few of them:

www.mailchimp.com
www.aweber.com
www.constantcontact.com
www.getresponse.com
www.1shoppingcart.com
www.freefollowup.com
www.iContact.com
www.1automationwiz.com

If you are new to email marketing and are not yet sure how this will integrate as part of your overall communications strategy then MailChimp offers a free service, with full functionality, this is a great way to experiment and see what works and what doesn't. The training videos and support are excellent in MailChimp, which makes it really easy to use if you are just starting out. The other services mentioned here all offer very similar facilities, at varying costs. These sign-up options can also be added to your facebook fan page, it's another great way to capture leads and spread the word.

You have collected some email addresses, now what do you do with them?

Using an automated email service like the ones listed above you can set up *autoresponders*. These are pre set emails that go out at specific times once the new community member adds their email address to your list. The great thing about this is that once you have set things up you don't have to do anything more each time someone joins. This takes care of delivering your promised e-course or audio file, it welcomes people to the community and it stays in touch every month. The initial set up does need some thought and time, but get it right and you will save hours. This same system can also be used for the marketing of specific events, sending out monthly newsletters, creating invitations to gatherings and many more things. It has become an accepted way of communicating in business but some people are

still a little shy about giving out their information; because of this it is vitally important to give an undertaking that you will always honour their privacy and never share the data that is given to you.

Good practice, frequency and content

Stay in touch via email but don't bombard; follow through on your promises. People may sign up to a daily inspirational message, in which case you need to send an inspirational message daily. They may sign up to a monthly news letter, in which case you don't want to send too much more than that as it may cause them to opt out of your list. There is no right or wrong way, but as with all things we do, it is vital to stay in integrity and principle. If you are communicating from an open heart and the intention to serve and add value you can't go wrong.

Just as with blogging, the content of your email marketing needs to be interesting. Take time to think about your audience, tailor your message to your reader, add in quotes and ensure that the subject line of the email is relevant and doesn't look like any of those many spam emails that we all receive.

You don't have to get it right first time, as with all things in life, marketing is a practice; you are in your ministry because you want to help people, remember that when you are putting together your marketing campaigns. The more people know about you, the more people you can help.

Webinars

A webinar is a seminar that is conducted over the internet. This requires software and a service provider. As with everything, you can pay a little or a lot. There are a variety of ways that you can do a webinar. Ideally, a webinar will minimally include multiple participant video conferencing, screen sharing, and chat. This can be done with an application such as Skype (Note: only the Mac version of Skype currently offers screen sharing) for a low cost. There are many applications that are specifically designed to be used for webinars. There are also free and low cost services available to hold webinars.

One that appears to offer much promise is anymeeting.com. This is a free service which means that there will be paid advertisements being shown on your participants' screens during your webinar. This may not be a bad thing but you do not have control over what advertisements may be shown. For example, you may not want a beer advertisement to show up during a webinar directed toward teens or recovering alcoholics. So, just understand that there is always a risk with such a service. With this particular free service you can collect fees for your webinar, record the session, share your screen, and have as many as 200 participants.

We have already mentioned Talk Fusion in this handbook. It is also a service that can be used for webinars and video conferencing. And, as mentioned previously, it is currently being used by Holmes Institute.

Special Custom Apps
If you're really abundant or blessed with a developer friend or member, you can consider an app that conveys your offerings. An example of this is Kathianne Lewis's *40 Days to Prosperity* or Wayne Dyer's *101 Ways To Transform Your Life*.

We live in a world of infinite possibilities – make your presence known and create your own impact on the world.

Always remember that God is your marketing director, you are Its willing voice.

Like us on Facebook!

The Revealing Center

The Metaphysical Motivator

Infinite Mind Marketing

Friend us on Facebook –

Juliet Vorster

Mary Laquet

Love what we are doing? Come visit us in our ministries:

The Revealing Center, a special focus ministry led jointly by Rev Mary Laquet and Rev Sunshine Daye

Think A New YOU!, the transformational teaching, mentoring and coaching of Juliet Vorster, RScP