



Church Community Builder Now Provides Check-In

by Steve Hewitt

Something new and exciting is happening to churches across the nation. Churches are discovering the importance, the advantage and the power of using a check-in system whenever you walk into their church to attend an worship, Sunday School or any other event. This week, I enjoyed a walk through of an exciting new check-in service now offered by Church Community Builder (CCB).

If you are not already familiar with the church management features of CCB, you might wish to check out the review of their services in the review we published last May (visit www.ccmag.com/0505/0505coverstory.pdf)

Why Use Check-in?

Check-in allows a church to check-in people simply and easily as they enter the building. In doing so, you are taking atten-

What is check-in?

Check-in is a simple way to “check-in” your members or visitors to an event at your church. By using CCB Check-in, you can easily keep track of who is attending an event, as well as distribute name-tags or pagers (for parents who are checking their children into a nursery and might need to be paged if there is a problem.) At check-in an attendees information can quickly be updated, or a new visitor’s information can be obtained.

While many Church Management Systems (CMS) have an attendance module, check-in really completes these systems by providing a quick and easy way to get your attendance data into your system, and because CCB’s Check-in system is Web based, the information is not just available to the church staff, but to each individual small group leader.

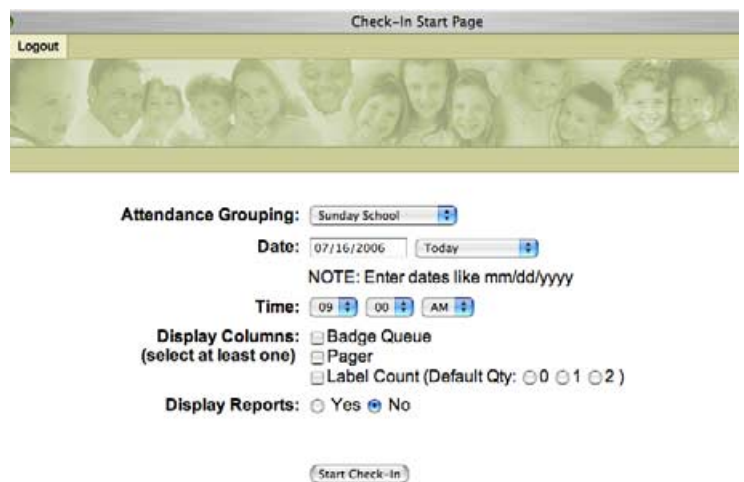


Figure 1 - Simple Check In Screen

dance and much more!
The number one reason check-in is

becoming popular with churches is because it can provide some needed security for children and provide some peace of mind for parents of babies and small children. For example, with the CCB Check-in Module when a parent is visiting a church they receive a security label printed on the spot with a unique number that they keep that coincides with the same number on a label tag for their child. This way, when they go to pick up their child, the nursery workers know that they are releasing the child to the parent that brought them. In turn, parents can rest assured that their child will not be released to anyone else by mistake. CCB Check-in also allows the parents to give special instructions that might be needed for that day's stay, such as information about diet.

What if a child begins to feel ill, or for some other reason a parent needs to be contacted? With Check-in, a pager can be assigned to the parent. CCB's system can work with any pager system, but if you are re-searching pagers for the first time, they suggest you consider Parent Seeker (<http://www.seekercommunication.com>). Another option is to use ccb with a visual display board system you may already have in place with your church. However, I think the advantage of check-in, particularly the check-in module offered by CCB, can provide much more in the area of ministry opportunities, and after I have given you more information about how the system works, I wish to address more of the ministry opportunities.

CCB's Check-in Can Work With Other CMS Programs

First, you might be thinking that CCB's Check-In Module is not for you since you are not already using CCB for your Church Management System.

Well the good news is that their check in system can be used as a stand-alone product in conjunction with another company's CMS. Many churches use a CMS that does not provide a good check-in system that is Web based and therefore accessible by their volunteer leadership. You can use CCB's Check-in without changing to their CMS. CCB will work with you to export your family and individual membership lists into their check-in system. And, because of their great reporting features, you can simply take updated information on your members, or information on new visitors, from printed reports provided by CCB's Check-in and add that information back into your CMS system.

What does CCB's Check-in include?

There are several parts to the CCB Check-in system. First, CCB's Check-in is a Web-based system, just as is their CMS, making it easy to set up check-in stations. In fact, anywhere you have Internet access; you can set up a check-in station. This means that if you have a notebook computer with either WiFi, or EVDO (high-speed wireless connection provided by a variety of cell phone service companies) you can provide check-in anywhere. Therefore, you could hold an event at your local park and still use CCB's Check-in to take attendance at an event!

With CCB's Check-in, you get a family/individual database that can contain basic contact information such as names, addresses, etc., as well as detailed information such as multiple e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and outreach or contact information.

Check-in has an easy to use flexible group manager, allowing you to set up the groups where you will assign individuals. It is easy to set up groups



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that might be unique to your church.

When you are ready to check someone in, you will check him or her into an event using the Event Planner. Events might be Sunday School, Worship, Choir or a camp. Setting up events is easy in CCB's Check-in. You can set up a single event or a re-occurring event, using their pop-up calendars to easily select the date or dates you desire.

Once a person is checked in, their attendance has been recorded.

Here is one of the ways CCB Check-in can really help in the area of ministry. Any and all small group leaders, choir leaders, etc., have the ability to log into the attendance-tracking manager and create a report showing them who has been absent. Because the system is Web based, leaders can check in to obtain this information anytime, any place. So, a Sunday School teacher could log in at home on a Sunday afternoon and easily send an e-mail to those that were absent that day. If you use CCB Check-in with CCB CMS, your options are even greater since the CCB CMS package has built in options to facilitate outreach.

Besides accomplishing automatic attendance of all of your events, CCB Check-in can also help with the distribution of name tags, by either printing a one-time tag, or noting that the attendee was using a reusable media, or pre-made plastic tag. For new attendees that plan to return, the volunteer can easily provide a print name tag, but also select "Badge Q"

which will order a reusable media badge to be made and ready for the attendee's next visit.

When a person approaches a check-in station, the volunteer can quickly look them up in the database and note their check-in in three different ways. They can look them up by typing in the last four digits of their phone number, or they can type in their last name. In addition, CCB Check-in is ready to work with additional systems that can be used to swipe a card for your return attendees, making check-in a snap.

What if you are a first-time visitor? One of the things that the folks at CCB know their customers want is a quick and easy experience for visitors when they check-in. The demonstration I was given would show that even a first time visitor would only need a very short time for the volunteer to gather some basic information, such as name and contact information.

Assignment to an event would be simple, their name tag would be printed, and they are ready for a volunteer to take them to their event!

The entire check-in system is very easy to use, since CCB realizes that check-in stations will be run by volunteers. I have seen the system and it is so easy that almost no training would be needed for many. The menus are simple (see samples displayed in this article) and the choices are few, making it easy to use as well as quick for the attendees.

What If The Internet is Down?

The advantage of using a Web based system are many. Check-in sites can be set up anywhere a computer has access to the Web, including remote or outdoor locations using EVDO. And, because the data is not being kept on the church offices computer, leaders can log in (password protected of course) and access the attendance data for their Bible study group, choir, etc., from their home at their convenience.

However, what do you do if your Internet access goes down? CCB's Check-in program has a report feature that allows you to print blank attendance marking sheets in advance for all of the groups and events you have set up. Print these out in advance and simply keep them available in case of an emergencies. You can always go back and enter the data at a later date. While this seems tedious this is the way you would be doing it every week without a check-in service!

CCB's Check-in, a Winner!

If you are not using a check-in program, I encourage you to check out the one provided by CCB. In fact, if you are in the market for a Church Management Software system, I encourage you to check out Church Community Builder.

You can learn more about them by

- a. Visiting their CHECK IN website page at http://www.churchcommunitybuilder.com/products_suite_checkin.php
- b. Reviewing the CCB website at www.churchcommunitybuilder.com
- c. Reading a white paper in PDF format about their services - www.churchcommunitybuilder.com/files/white_paper_why_ccb.pdf
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