

rdp >

We are invisible. In many of our communities most people do not even know (or have forgotten) that we exist.

going viral

We always ask the people we work with this question: what are the perceptions of local people, outside your congregation, of your church's current offer? Some of the results were a bit scary and a surprise to many of the participants. Some of our own perceptions of ourselves (e.g. friendly) are not the necessarily the same as others not involved within the church (e.g. cliquy) or who don't look like us. The current majority of negative perceptions and even some of the more positive ones (e.g. beautiful quiet building) can be a real barrier to our relationships and engagement with our communities.

In summary, the key perceptions of us now are:

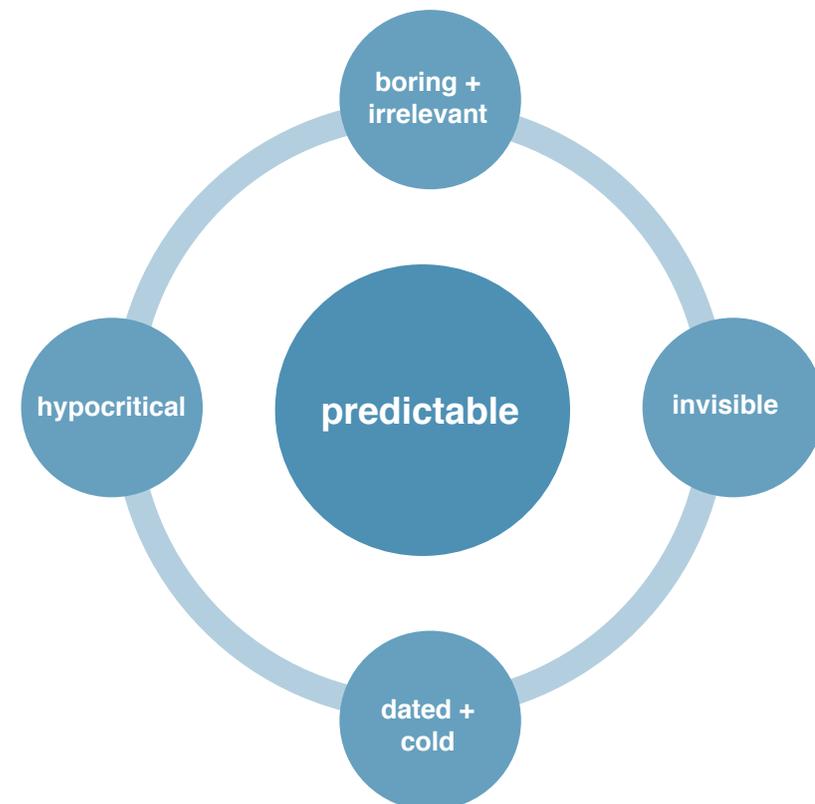
invisible - we are invisible. In many of our communities most people do not even know (or have forgotten) that we exist or what we offer.

dated - our look and offer is dated; we have not invested thought, care, time or money in branding, spaces, images or welcome; we look mean.

hypocritical - there is in some communities anger about the church nationally, what it has done in their community, or not done, and many people's own and/or their friends'/family's negative experience – "I am not good enough to go in".

In summary, we are seen [at best] as predictable, people know what we will say and what they will get and they don't like/want it. The offer, values

and messages are "not for people like me" – it is for "them". We have to change the negative perceptions of us as a first step to reengaging with our community and reenergising our offer. We have to disrupt/change the views that are held in our communities.

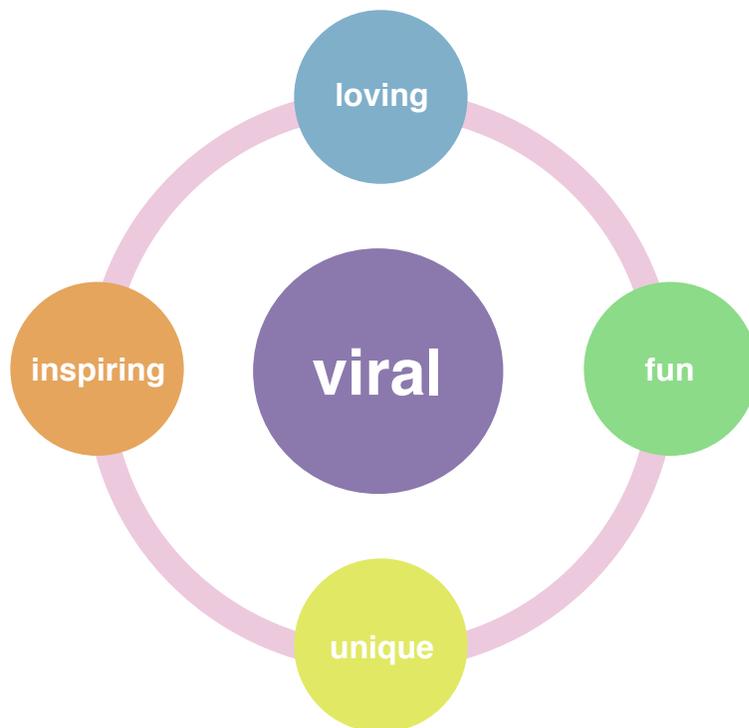


rdp >

We can no longer afford to be quiet and safe and we will need to take risks in order to succeed.

As in Jesus's mission we now have to do some pretty dynamic, disruptive and highly symbolic actions, which are reinforced by a clear and consistent message of change and ensure that it is being disseminated widely, preferably by others. In the jargon this is called '**going viral**'.

We do not have millions of pounds (well we choose not to) or other resources.



We have to think clearly and creatively about messages that are relevant to our key local community. We need to have targeted and high impact messages and actions that will communicate our offer in terms that our community will understand.

unique – we are different, mostly in a good way! What are the good points about this that can underpin our offer (are they true?) and when are you dumping the bad points?

loving – we have a profound and transforming message of a radical love – where is it?

inspiring – we can show that there is more to life in our relationships with each other and something much 'bigger' and inspiring.

fun – how will you have fun? What are the attractive and fun elements that are you offering?

We need to get noticed in a good way (what unexpected and high profile things can you do?) Who else can you involve? To be successful we have to develop new and generous relationships and invest time, creative thought and resources and be clear and consistent in our messages, language and actions. We can no longer afford to be quiet and safe and we will need to take risks in order to succeed.

www.rapiddevelopment.org.uk