



“Why WordPress” and Optimizing Your Website for SEO

**A Plain Language Guide
For Business Owners**

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A Business Owners Perspective on “Why WordPress”

First, welcome to WordPress! WordPress has become the “de facto” standard in Content Management System (CMS) website development for very good reasons. I would like to take this opportunity to explain “why WordPress” and how it fits into our company’s Mission and Vision. Also, though this “preamble” is a bit lengthy, it is intended to answer many questions or concerns business owners might have about WordPress - and to offer insight why a firm that provides Business Systemization as well as Web Design and developing Marketing Plans among our core offerings would recommend using WordPress.

One of our basic approaches when engaging with a business revolves around the saying “You give a man a fish, and he eats for a day ... you teach a man to fish, and he eats forever ...”

By providing a WordPress site, we are also providing the ability for the business owner to “fish” in the unknown waters of web content, Search Engine Optimization (!) and internet marketing (both www. and mobile). I truly believe there is a paradigm shift in process from the old school “keep everything a secret” web developer, “you need an SEO expert to crack Google's 7 pack” SEO marketer and “there is no bang for the buck” mobile marketing attitude. This shift is born of years of frustration in understanding “**Return on Investment**” where web presence and SEO costs are concerned and also the explosion of mobile devices being used as the primary internet access method.

“Old School” websites were in many cases money pits, and designers with borderline ethical values have squeezed their clients for every penny they could ... and for what return? Then, when Google made its last grand change many “old school” websites started to lose their ranking. Why? The SEO design was faulty (by contemporary standards) and the website was designed as a *static* site. What’s that you ask?

Static vs. Dynamic websites - what's the difference?

From www.EDinteractive.com



What are static and dynamic websites?

There are many static websites on the Internet, you won't be able to tell immediately if it is static, Static websites can only really be updated by someone with knowledge of website development. ...

Advantages of static websites

- Quick to develop
- Cheap to develop
- Cheap to host

Disadvantages of static websites

Requires web development expertise to update site

- Site not useful for the user
- Content can get stagnant

Dynamic Sites on the other hand can be more expensive to develop initially, but the advantages are numerous. At a basic level, a dynamic website can give the website owner the ability to simply update and add new content to the site. For example, news and events could be posted to the site through a simple browser interface. Dynamic features of a site are only limited by imagination. Some examples of dynamic website features could be: content management system, e-commerce system, bulletin / discussion boards, intranet or extranet facilities, ability for clients or users to upload documents, ability for administrators or users to create content or add information to a site (dynamic publishing).

Advantages of dynamic websites

- Much more functional website
- Much easier to update
- New content brings people back to the site and helps in the search engines
- Can work as a system to allow staff or users to collaborate

Disadvantages of dynamic websites

- Slower / more expensive to develop



- Hosting costs a little more

*Neither of these disadvantages is true with WordPress sites ... (JS)

Did the trend of developing more dynamic websites create a new boom for the designers? I'm sure some are trying to keep under the radar and will continue to over charge and overwhelm their clients ... but I see this as a time of reckoning where firms such as ours have an opportunity and *responsibility* to our clients to explain the truth. In the past, the truth may have been too complex because of the technical nature of the design; the truth may have been too complex because of the lack of familiarity and newness of SEO; and there was no past for mobile! With a WordPress site, this is no longer true. The truth of web design is simple, the truth of SEO is no longer new or unfamiliar and can be presented simply, and mobile web presence and marketing is one of our specialties. Where we advise business owners on how to market their business, it was only natural we become intimate with this subject matter as it is integral to running a successful marketing program. Where we are businessmen (and women), it was only natural we capitalize on the opportunity and create a niche to fill the need created by this paradigm shift.

What can I tell you to substantiate all of this? You can "Google" "why is WordPress the best" and get 189 million reasons (in .21 seconds), or read the following:

From "ebusinessmatters.com": (I have paraphrased a bit)

WordPress has the largest and fastest growing (user) community. Over 30% of all websites are now CMS sites, and over 54% of those are WordPress sites.

| | usage | change since 1 July 2011 | market share |
|--------------|-------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. WordPress | 14.7% | +0.4% | 54.4% |
| 2. Joomla | 2.7% | | 9.9% |
| 3. Drupal | 1.7% | +0.1% | 6.2% |
| 4. vBulletin | 1.4% | | 5.2% |
| 5. Blogger | 0.8% | +0.1% | 2.9% |



These figures are relevant because the more people using WordPress, the more people who are testing it and “bugs” get spotted and fixed quicker. Also, there is a bigger market for plugin, theme and widget developers, so WordPress gets more and better quality themes. WordPress is now used by some of the largest corporations ... Sony PlayStation, CNN, Wallstreet Journal, ...Ford, New York Times...

Now, with all of those huge corporations using WordPress, it must be expensive, right? ... and why would they use *blogging* software to build a website? ... and this must take complex and specialized software, right? Well, here are the answers to these questions and many more reasons why Lighthouse Website Design Services recommends having your website designed in WordPress.

But It’s only a blog site – a blog is a website and a website is a blog – don’t let the terminology confuse or bother you...WordPress provides the ability to have “Static Pages” (like old school designs) and “Posts” or blogs.

Save Money – Basic or complex, most changes no longer need your designer. Make the edits yourself whenever you want and save the money you would have paid your designer for more important things (like maybe an additional marketing blast 😊).

It’s Free – The basic shell of WordPress is free. The only cost you need to incur is if you want to upgrade to a “Premium Theme” or install a “Premium Plugin” or Widget. Upgrades are also free (typically even for premium sites).

Greater Accessibility – If you have a web browser at your disposal, you can make updates. There is no special software required (once your initial site has been set up). Just login and blog or update away!

Consistency – Using standard templates allows all of your pages to have the same look and feel. Your readers (and you) will not be confused by “page to page” layout changes.

Better Time Management – Add content and then schedule those posts to publish whenever you want. You could write an entire years’ worth of blogs, if you wanted to, and have each automatically post to the site when you want until done.



Plugins! – With the addition of a few plugins, a WordPress blog site can evolve into a full service membership site with as many levels as you would like.

What’s a plugin? – Think of a plugin like a bolt-on application to your basic site. Maybe you want to have a calendar page on your site for upcoming events. Instead of having to design the calendar page, a “3 click” process can install an existing design ... or you may want to have a slide show run on your site ... “3 clicks” and you’re ready to start adding slides ... and many useful plugins are free!

Social Networking Friendly – Automatically integrate your blog posts with social media like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Use your WordPress site instead of going to each one individually – just make an update to your website and release the change to your Social Media pages.

Make use of all forms of Media – Easily add images, audio or video to posts and pages.

Built-in SEO – Yet another “specialty skill set” you don’t need to become an expert on. The base design of WordPress sites are consistent and streamlined **using code that is Search Engine friendly**. Plus, with the right plugin, you’re able to customize every page or post to give you the highest probability of getting your pages high up in search results.

Sites are not Static – **Content is king**, and new content and new pages is what attracts robots, bots, crawlers, spiders ... or whatever you might want to call them! The robots will search your site looking for new content and new pages and changes they can index. New pages can get indexed in hours when you add new content regularly. Of course, you could pay an SEO hundreds of dollars a month for the same benefit! Really, watch out for the “SEO or Social Media Marketing Experts” – so many of them are corrupt or incompetent that it really makes my job difficult. How do you tell someone that their website has been poorly designed, or their “Social Media” expert is a fraud? See my “equation for getting found on Google” later on to see why I can make these comments.

Security – One of the knocks “against” WordPress was that hackers could break in to your Web site. But, the exact opposite is true. Plugins are available that



essentially “hacker proof” the site and, and, when uploading files in WordPress ... no ftp or other protocol that could be hacked is needed.

Ease of Printing – Custom Design Web sites are seldom designed to print pages. After installing a simple plugin, all your WordPress blog site content can be printed in easy-to-read format...without creating duplicate “printable” versions of pages.

With all that plugins do – did I say it’s easy to use? If you are passingly fluent in “Microsoft Word”, you will find learning to edit content, post new pages, add photos and images in WordPress is just as easy ...even if you have no design or programming experience. And, did I mention there is a “paste from Word” function in the WordPress editor? If you don’t like using the editor in WordPress, stick with Word!

It can be Inspiring – By adding posts and pages and managing your own content, your site will provide you with “pride of ownership and a feeling of accomplishment”. When you see the results of your own efforts instead of those of a hired designer, you may find yourself inspired to add even more content.

Universal Platform – With custom designed Web sites it is a rarity for a “new designer” to be able to pick up where the old designer or developer left off. You would most likely have to start from scratch. However, with a WordPress site, almost anyone with basic PHP and MySQL experience can jump into your blog site and provide very capable support.

No Loss of Work – Your work is automatically saved periodically even if you haven’t published your blog posts live to the web yet. Why can’t other programs do that???

One-Step Posting (ease of use yet again) – It might sound like I’m repeating myself, but with WordPress you truly only click a single button to make the content appear live online. In conventional designs, there are 3+ steps required (technical steps I might add) not just a single “click”.

Customization – Colors, Fonts, Content, Layout ... the list goes on. Even though WordPress is template based, many of the themes are incredibly flexible and customizable. Your WordPress site built in the same theme as any other



WordPress site can have a truly unique look and feel. It may be “Cookie Cutter” on the interface side of the equation, but on the “www” side, it’s all yours.

Cultivate Repeat Visitors – The fact that you add new content frequently will also encourage and increase your repeat visitor numbers. When people like what you contribute to the Web, they want to know when you add more. (See Automated Syndication!)

Novelty – Easily change your site layout and appearance by swapping themes. Great for temporary changes for holidays, seasons or special events. I will add a word of caution here if you have customized the site, some of that customization might get “broken” by this sort of change ... but there are still simple ways to keep your look “fresh” without worrying about breaking anything.

Increase Your Authority – If you are good at what you do, you either are - or are looking to be - a content expert or authority in your field. Your web presence is critical to this. Generating frequent and meaningful posts and sharing your opinion on what’s happening in your industry offers an incredible opportunity to establish rapport and authority with your audience. When you’re “reporting” on industry happenings, and giving your opinions, speed is of the essence – and WordPress allows you to add all of this with one click! Not only that, but you can automatically set up your RSS feeds (Real Simple Syndication) and automated notices by email when new posts have been made. Use “teasers” to get former visitors to come back to read the rest of the article, or in the case of RSS, visitors can subscribe to receive the entire post through their RSS reader or mobile device. This is not just the “future” of how communication will evolve in a few years, but this is NOW, TODAY. So ... naturally the next item is ...

Automated Syndication – Blog posts can be automatically converted to RSS feeds and syndicated to blog directories and other peoples’ websites.

What is RSS? Really Simple Syndication is essentially a web based feed of your content that is “fed” to your subscribers in a real-time manner. If you don’t have a smart phone or tablet, you can still subscribe to “RSS” feeds ... for instance you can customize your “Yahoo” page and add RSS feeds ... From Yahoo:



RSS, an acronym for "Really Simple Syndication", is a standard distribution format that websites, such as news, sports, and blog sites, use to send updated headlines automatically to people like yourself.

An example of an RSS feed might be keeping track of local news, sports or weather ... like "news.yahoo.com/rss"

Immediate Identification of Hot Topics From Your Audience – If you create a post and get one or two...or even no comments, and then you post a topic that generates a bunch of comments, you learn instantly that this is a hot topic that you can capitalize on. This is an extremely valuable feature straight out of the box on WordPress sites. No custom coding or surveys required.

Two-Way Communication with Visitors - Through the use of blog comments, your site is not restricted to one-way "outbound" communication with visitors. Sure, you can always have a "contact us" page on your traditional Web site, but blog comments allow for anonymous two-way discussion between you and your readers. And, every time someone makes a comment to one of your posts, the inclusion of their content full of keyword phrases helps you to build better search positioning. It's like getting free SEO help from the general public!

You Control the Discussions – When you write a blog you are essentially beginning a conversation with your readers. Your visitors make comments to the discussion you started. But, the comments people make are approved by you *before* anyone ever sees them on your Web site. Because you can allow or remove comments, you don't need to worry about any derogatory or defamatory posts being published about your business on your site.

Renewed enthusiasm – Create content about industry happenings, product reviews, education or any pertinent subject. The opportunities for what to write are truly limitless. If you want improved different results, you have to change or what you do has to change. Remember – one definition of insanity is "doing the same thing the same way day after day and expecting different results"!

Controlled Site Growth - (Again – simplicity). WordPress handles all of the site admin when it comes to your site map and page linking. You do not need to be a master programmer to make sure all of your pages and posts are linked and easy to find on your website.



Safe File uploads – Add your media files by uploading to your server from within WordPress instead of through traditional ftp or other file transfer protocols. You no longer need to worry about deleting or overwriting important files or uploading to the wrong directories.

More Brand Awareness – Since the common approach with a blog site is to build out the site into an industry-specific authoritative resource containing hundreds or even thousands of pages of content, the number of opportunities for the general public to see your brand identity is multiplied exponentially over and above the traditional 10 page Web site.

Speed of Communication – WordPress allows you to have instant control over content without having to pay your designer for every update.

You can't break it (so relax!) – The level of angst associated with using your WordPress site should be minimal. Your Admin should be regularly saving to a “restore point”, so even if you did do something outrageous (and believe me, I can't even imagine what that might be) ... your site can be restored in minutes. If you add content you don't like ... delete it. If you don't like the wording ... edit it. As long as a little common sense prevails (like don't delete pages or posts you may want in the future) ... WordPress is very hard to break.

Increased Functionality with Lower Cost – Thousands of pre-written programs called plugins (many free!) can increase the functionality of your out-of-the-box blog software. Traditional websites require everything to be custom programmed. With WordPress, if you want to add functionality, it is typically a two minute process. (Ironically, I find some of the plugins to be more difficult to use and learn than WordPress itself!)

Full ecommerce capability – Yes, you can sell products, have a store; get paid for your services via debit/credit cards on your WordPress site for a fraction of a custom e-comm set-up.

Phenomenal Support – The WordPress user community is massive. The level of support and educational materials is just wonderful. This is not a secretive society, it is truly an open and supportive community of programmers and users.



Optimizing your website and Blogs for SEO

Helpful hints (but really “**Should Do’s**”)

When considering your blog, be sure to have a particular keyword that you want to focus on for SEO in the title – preferably at the very beginning of the title. As much as blogging should be fun, the goal is to have your blog *read* ... and to be read it has to be found! Note: These “should do’s” are really aimed at Search Engine crawlers, not your reading audience *and* do not necessarily make for good technical or critical writing. I have had to drastically modify my writing style, and even then rely on the SEO plugin to tell me “how I am doing” where SEO is concerned. Don’t be discouraged by this ... it is pretty easy to pick up – and few bloggers are looking for Pulitzer Prizes.

I think being willing to change your writing style is really very important for SEO. Keep your audience in mind and be as true to them and the style and type of writing they might find entertaining. You do want them to be “repeat customers”! But understand that the “ends justify the means” where good SEO practices are concerned. As noted above, *they do need to find you*. The good news is that “all things in moderation” also applies when it comes to good SEO. I find blogs packed with links and decorations to be unsightly, more difficult to read and generally in poor taste. I am a believer in “blogging etiquette” where these “SEO tricks” are OK to use, but as sparingly as possible while still providing high “SEO points”. Daunting? Not really ... this is why I install the “WordPress SEO” plugin - and recommend it for you casual readers. You can write your blogs as you like to write. The plugin will provide you guidance on how to improve your blogs “Search Engine Appeal”. You may have to make some “literary” decisions, but my suggestion is to write your blogs first, worry about SEO later.

How to start ...

What is your favorite text editor? If you don’t feel comfortable using the WordPress Text Editor ... use your own! If you use other than Microsoft Word, then select what you have written, copy it to your clipboard, and then use the “Paste as Plain Text” icon. You can pretty up, add bold, italics, headers ... after the



fact. And please note, you will want to do all of these things because crawlers look for “decorations” ... and when you hi-lite then select the “decoration” WordPress automatically creates the right “HTML Tag” for the crawler! What do I mean? WordPress adds the HTML behind the scenes that is “SEO Friendly” when you format text. Some examples that WordPress does automatically when you format text ...

The Bold Tag

The bold (or) html tag is a great way to emphasize a word or phrase in mid sentence. The basis for making use of this “text decoration” is really twofold. Obviously it is to help the reader understand a point of emphasis you are trying to make, but it also serves to inform the search engines that you consider this particular area of text to be more important than others.

The italicized key term

The italic text decoration (or tag) is used again to provide depth or emphasis to a word in your blog. In terms of the SEO benefit, bold is better, but the italic tag does “strengthen” key phrases to both the reader and search engines.

The underline

The underline (or <u> tag) is one of the most effective uses of on page SEO emphasis. This resonates well both with readers of your text as well as the search engines and is one of the most effective text decoration methods of optimizing text for SEO.

The most comprehensive approach to on-page SEO in terms of text decoration is to make use of **all** of these html tags in your writing. A word of caution however; using this type of technique *excessively* can have a negative effect on your writing and search engine placement. The best rule of thumb is to write with the reader in mind first and if the use of bold, underline or italicized text is appropriate - then use them. I tend to go back to the blog after it is written to add “emphasis” to keywords. Be judicious, but also be informed! Decorating keywords throughout your blog can have a positive impact on your readers experience and your SEO standings. Still concerned about SEO?



The “WordPress SEO” Plugin by Yoast

I am a fan of this particular plugin. It is simple to interpret and you can immediately see the effects that simple updates to your blog have on SEO. Using this plugin as your guide, you can make any blog SEO friendly and therefore a truly valuable addition to your website.

Blogging for SEO ...

I’m going to go way out on a limb here ... I’d be willing to bet that one of your primary goals is to attain high rankings in Google (without having to pay an SEO specialist hundreds of dollars a month!). It took our website about four months to get to #1 on local Google searches ... and all we did was follow the logic I use on all of my websites. I’m not an “SEO genius” ... just pretty well read and educated on the subject. Simple structural and content rules apply, and your WordPress site was constructed with these rules in mind. Adding content and making updates is the next step in reaching “Google Nirvana”. And ... use the “**WordPress SEO**” plugin! It will take care of all of your “HTML Tags”, PermaLink Structure, Canonicals ... all of the technical aspects of your website and blogs SEO. You may need some assistance getting it configured initially ... but that is something we can do for you as well.

Please don’t think for a moment I am understating the technical requirements of SEO ... quite the contrary. But an educated client is my best client. This is my opinion ... let the owner do what they do best, and hire someone (like me) to handle their website and SEO needs. The goal is to find a happy medium. First, if by reading this a business owner is made aware of the unethical side of the SEO and Social Media Marketing experts, and avoids being taken by them, then I have accomplished something. If that same business owner hires me (or a trusted associate) and doesn’t get fleeced – I have accomplished something. A final word on this ... if someone is guaranteeing you that they can get you high up in Google’s rankings, they are lying. Plain language ... they are lying. Even following “My Process” there are no guarantees ...



My Process

As I noted earlier, I have an equation for getting “found” on Google. It’s actually very simple – but it takes work – and attention to detail. Without giving up too much of my “intellectual property”, here is what the equation looks like:

$$A + B + C + D = \text{High Google Ranking}$$

A= Website with Excellent SEO Design

B= Optimized Listings and Citation Sites

C= Relevance and Activity on Your Website

D= Social Media

I’m going to be a bit vague here – because after looking at hundreds of websites – some even done by “SEO experts” or “Social Media experts” – I have found one – yes one (other than mine of course 😊) that actually do all of these well. OK – so it seems like I’ve dropped the gauntlet – how do I justify my comments?

A. Website with Excellent SEO Design ... The best way I could think of was to use a third party website SEO evaluation tool. It is updated and maintained based on the most recent “Google Rules” - which offers two advantages – 1. I don’t have to be 100% on top of the latest changes – I mean it’s exhausting as it is staying as current as I do! and 2. It’s impartial. What could be better? It’s not me judging the website, it’s the software! I do provide a translation of the results, primarily because the software does sometimes make a mistake (just like the Google crawlers do) – and I double check the results. When talking to prospects, I run this automated test on any of my websites and their website and compare them side by side. The technical requirements are pretty straightforward, and for an “SEO expert” to not follow even the most basic “SEO design rules” is inexcusable. And the sad truth is that the vast majority of websites – even those designed by the self-proclaimed “SEO Experts” have very poor technical SEO designs.

B. Optimized Listings and Citation Sites ... simple research is the answer. When I see how little is being done, or worse, how much people *are paying* someone to do the work for them (!) ... it just about makes me crazy. When the most basic steps aren’t being taken, or the information is being posted improperly, or the



business is paying a lot to get this done - I know the client is not dealing with a real pro.

C. Relevance and Activity on Your Website ... By doing “B” well, and then either providing blogs or training the business owner to blog ... plus doing “D” well ... is how to optimize “C”.

D. Social Media ... Sorry to the “Social Media Marketers” – but high scores on “D” without A, B and C just won’t cut it. There really has to be a comprehensive approach to optimizing your web presence. Using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn ... video ... whatever the media or medium ... just can’t be done in a vacuum. My recommendation is to worry more about the “A, B, C’s” and use your website to update your social media activity. Sure, you can do more, but what will you get for a return? If you do more, be sure that you are getting a return on your time, effort and especially costs – I have witnessed some very shady activity where this aspect of web presence is concerned. Use Social Media to drive additional website traffic ... that is a great way to improve your “Google Relevance”.

I really do get infuriated when I witness prospects or clients paying for “SEO experts” or “Social Media Marketing” that isn’t done well. I was recently asked why? I responded “If you saw a friend getting robbed, or a neighbor’s house getting broken into – wouldn’t that bother you?”

So, why can’t I guarantee a front page in Google ranking? Let’s look at the equation ... say that A thru D have a maximum value of 10 each. That would mean that a “perfect SEO score” is 40. What if there is already a bunch of “40’s” out there in your industry? What if they’ve been there a long time and still all do “A thru D” really well? Who’s going to drop down so Mr. Johnny-Come-Lately can rise up?

You get the picture ... you will improve – guaranteed – but get to the top? Only if you do all of these things the best and for *the longest amount of time*.

Here’s an offer ... since you obviously either read this whole e-book, or maybe just got lucky and skipped to the end ... if you want me to analyze your website, I will give you a \$50 off coupon. My normal fee for the analysis is \$125.00 – I’ll do it for \$75.00 ... just e-mail me at jay@lighthousewebsitedesignservices.com and

mention you read this e-book. And – if you become a client, the cost of the analysis is waived. I truly hope you found this informative and helpful.

Jay