5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW AS A WORDPRESS NEWBIE

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WordPress is a great platform to build your website on. It gives you the tools needed to publish your content online and enables you to create an attractive website.

But just like any other website building platform there are elements that you need to understand in order to get the full advantage of WordPress. Unfortunately many newbies are only told about getting their websites up and running and don't concentrate on the following 5 crucial elements.

1. WordPress Security

There are two basic elements that you can apply to your website to help secure your website against attack. Guessing a user's username and password remain the number one way that unauthorised parties access WordPress websites.

The first one is to change the default admin username. When you install WordPress, it automatically creates the username "admin" with administrator privileges. It's the username that is obviously predictable to hackers.

Using the "admin" username, they can easily perform a brute force attack to crack your login and take control over your site.

As WordPress gives you the option to change the username during installation, it doesn't make sense to stick with the default one. Therefore, while installing WordPress, make sure to change your default WordPress admin username to something different.

The second is to use a strong password. Use a combination of numbers, letters and special characters in your password. There are many great free services online that allows you to generate a strong password at the click of a button.

One of my favourites is PasswordsGenerator.net. It allows you to select the password length and complexity. You can also take advantage of password solutions such as LastPass to store your strong passwords in a secure location.

2. Avoid Unnecessary Plugins

Plugins are a great way to extend the functionality of your site however installing too many can impact the performance of your site.

Plugins that are not being used should be deactivated and uninstalled if you do not plan on using them again. If they are not deleted once deactivated they can cause security issues, so make sure that they are totally removed from your site.

Beginner WordPress users do not adhere to this principle. It is not uncommon for a new WordPress user to install dozens of plugins. Even if they are only using a few, this slows down their website and increases the resources required to run the website.

I encourage you to only use plugins that will extend the functionality of your site.

3. Updates

It is important to keep WordPress, and any themes and plugins you are using, up to date. Whenever a vulnerability or bug is found in the software, a new update is issued by the WordPress or plugin developers. You will be notified when you log into your website that new updates are available. Ignoring a WordPress update can create a security vulnerability on your website and make hackers' lives easier.

Many people think that their WordPress site may break while performing an update, but that's just a myth. To ensure that your website is not affected in this way make sure you buy themes and plugins from reputable companies. If you use free plugins first check that they have good reviews and support.

Before installing any updates make sure that you take a backup of your site so that it can be restored to its original form if there are any mishaps.

Don't forget, a newer version is created for a genuine reason. Therefore, you should never ignore a WordPress update.

4. Backups

New WordPress users (all new website owners for that matter) fail to recognise the importance of backing their website up regularly. This is a mistake they usually continue to make until their website is hacked and they lose a lot of data.

Backups are an essential part of your website and should never be an afterthought. It is a shame that most people first need to experience data loss before they learn the importance of backing up.

Many hosting companies have their own backup solutions which will backup your whole account. My preferred way to backup your site is to use iTheme's BackupBuddy. This allows you to schedule your backups daily, weekly or monthly. When backing up your site it is best to make sure that it is saved to a different location. This will make it is easy to access if it is needed as well as making sure that it is not compromised if some misfortune happens to your site.

Please make sure that you have a proper backup strategy for your site and it is implemented regularly.

5. SEO

SEO is a major part of any website but before we get into keywords and descriptions there is a setting that needs to be changed within the WordPress installation.

What I am talking about is setting up the permalinks.

A permalink is a permanent static hyperlink to a specific blog post in your WordPress blog. You would probably have noticed that WordPress default permalink structure is something like www.yoursite.com/?p=123.

Not only does this look awkward, but also bad for SEO and users.

A user and search-engine friendly permalink structure doesn't only help you get ranked higher in search engines, but also shows your professionalism to your readers.

After you've installed WordPress, never forget to make changes to your permalinks structure, by going under Settings » Permalinks and choosing one of the settings. To get the most out of your SEO efforts, use appropriate keywords in your permalink structure.

To help with SEO on your site I recommend installing the WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin. This plugin allows you to check the SEO rank for each of your posts and pages and makes suggestions on how to improve it.

Each page and post should have a meta description of no more than 160 characters. The description should contain at least one of the keywords that you want to be found for.

These are basic SEO settings but it will give you a good foundation to get started.

If you need additional help with your WordPress website I provide done-for-you online marketing solutions.