WordPress Demystified Week 4

Webcare for your Business Sustainability

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Would you believe we're on week 4? WordPress Demystified.

This is about web care for your business sustainability.

And I know it's like maintenance is not the most interesting thing in the world. Okay. I'm putting that out there now.

Just imagine you're going for a walk and you come across a garden, and it's so sad because you can see that this garden was absolutely beautiful at one stage. It's got gorgeous roses, lupins, whatever your favourite flowers are, it's in this garden. But it's just overrun. There are weeds everywhere. You can't see the beauty of it anymore because it wasn't maintained.

Websites may not be quite so obvious. They may not have weeds growing up all over it. But you can still tell when errors start appearing.

And you've spent time and money and effort creating this website, whether it's just you or you and a designer, there's still effort and time and money, blood, sweat, and tears maybe.

The big, the big effort is over. You've got it. You've got a website. And now it's to maintain it. And why I say for business sustainability is because your website is an asset.

It should, and I don't like using the should word, it should be sending you through leads.

People that are interested in your products and/or services. So these are people that are landing on your website and filling in forms or downloading something or watching videos, whatever it is you've got, because they're interested in what you have.

And we can't rely on search engines and social media all the time because those platforms or those services are always changing.

Yeah, it's now, and I've mentioned it in one of the other videos, that because of the AI summary at the top of Google search engines now, websites are finding they're having a massive drop in traffic to their website because people are getting or thinking they're getting what they want in that little summary at the top.

We wanna maintain your website. This is so important.

A real live case came to me, case study. A woman who I've been working with several years ago came back to me and she said, there's an error on my website. I don't know what it is. And she had been auto-updating her website. Now some auto updates are fine, some not so much, and everything had got out of step.

And so what had happened was there was a critical error on her website. Thing was, she didn't know when it had happened. Her website had been like that for 6 weeks because I could check the error log. Her website had been down for 6 whole weeks. She hadn't noticed.

Automation is great. And you still need to check that it's all worked. You can't just do automation and think, well, that's it. That's it. Everything's automated.

I can go off now. Somebody still needs to check that things are working. You can get systems to check that things are working. I have that with my clients' web care plans. However, when they're not working, they're gonna send me an email.

So I still have to, or if you've got a VA or an AI VA, somebody still needs to check your emails to say that yes, this is working or no, it isn't working. And then somebody needs to react to that. Having a website down for 6 weeks. Can't imagine that. I really can't.

You'll see me flicking between screens as I'm looking at my notes because otherwise I'm gonna go way off track. It's a question people often ask me is how often should I maintain my website?

It's kind of how long is a piece of string? So if you have an online shop and you're taking lots of orders every day, you need to make sure that that website is always up to date and you want to maintain it at the quietest time of the day for your web visitors.

If you know that your web visitors are really busy, say in the evenings, your ideal clients are on your website in the evenings looking for services, downloaded lead magnets, whatever it is they're doing, then you do not want to be maintaining your website at that time of day. You want to do it at the reverse time of day.

And how often depends on what's happening. Online shops often have a lot more plugins. So those are like apps for your phone. They, they add functionality to your website. Now, if you've got a website that has got a lot of plugins on it for various different features, the likelihood is that you're gonna have to update your website more frequently purely because you have a lot of plugins.

And you don't know when somebody's going— when somebody, a developer, is going to release an update to a plugin.

We have a major release of WordPress coming in December. They often do them in early December.

Why December? I don't know. You've just had Black Friday go through. And then you've got Christmas coming up. So to me, December is not the right time to release a major update.

But yeah, we have got one coming in early December unless they delay it for some reason.

With major releases, what you find is there may be changes to the WordPress core. That plugin developers and theme developers may have to catch up to. It's one of the reasons I do not upgrade my clients' websites immediately unless there's a massive security update in there. You want to let everybody else update first, then find any issues if there are any.

And then I update my clients' websites. So how often really depends.

I would say look at your website weekly, at least weekly. With the way AI bots are attacking websites at the moment and finding flaws in plugins, you have to be looking at your website at least weekly. But look, a look at a website is literally signing into the backend, Checking how many updates you've got to do. If there are no updates to be done, you can log out again. If there are updates to be done and you don't know which ones are a higher priority than any of the others, it's time to take a backup and do some updates when your website isn't busy.

Now, always, I did mention it just then, always take a backup beforehand. Always.

The reason that we're doing all these is to prevent, well, to prevent hackers from getting in, to prevent ways for them to get in.

So it really is important It really is important that you do this, that you're pulling out those weeds in the garden and locking any garden gates, trying to keep the analogy going there, because the hackers are looking for a way in. And that's why it's important that we keep everything up to date.

Now, when you have updated, you've done your backup, you've done your updates, you then want to test your website.

The testing is just important, as important as everything else. And you can sign into an incognito browser or incognito window in your browser or a tab and test it there because that window doesn't know that you were just logged into the website. It will treat you as a normal web visitor. Therefore, if there are any issues, you're more likely to see them in an incognito window.

And you want to think about what plugins you've updated. If you've updated a contact form plugin, for example, you want to go and test your contact form.

Because if anything was going to go wrong, that's the place it's more likely to because you've just updated it. So those, that's the kind of thing you want to think about.

As well as updating plugins, themes, WordPress core, you want to check the speed of your website. If you're doing blog posts, for example, And you're adding in images. Now, if you're using your phone and going straight from your phone to your website, those images are gonna be way too big in both physical size and storage size. So you want to make sure as part of your maintenance that you are running something that will reduce the size of those images. At least the storage size.

If you don't, and you're loading an image that may be 5 megabytes, which is nothing on social media, it's nothing on your phone, on your website, that's gonna start slowing things down. And you don't want web visitors arriving on your website and then sort of twiddle your thumbs, you know, waiting for the page to load because they'll leave.

The web maintenance is for your business sustainability. It's for your credibility. It's to keep your website going. It's to keep your web visitors happy.

Like I said, you just, if you even just go into your backend of your website once a week and look at the dashboard and see what it says. Are there any messages with a red band on the left-hand side? Red is for critical, amber, green, it's okay.

Also on your dashboard, you can see where it says your site health.

And it will show you— sorry, I just had another thought— and it will show you if there are improvements to be done. If you're on a WordPress website that has an older version of WordPress, like before 5.2, you won't have the site health on there because it wasn't back, it wasn't around back then. That's when they introduced it. But if you've got a website that is that old and hasn't been updated, you've got more issues to worry about than your site health. Not being there.

You've got a lot more to worry about than that.

You also want to think about the usability of your website.

I've spoken about strategy and alignment in earlier weeks. This is more about the usability, the accessibility. Of your website.

A few years ago, a local networking group decided to have their website redesigned. They spent a load of money on rebranding and, and bringing in— they thought they were aligning with their new with their niche. I took one look at their website and couldn't read the font. I know I wear glasses, but that wasn't about that. The font was so curly, unless it was only that I knew what it said that I had any clue of what it actually said.

And they were using that as their headers. On their pages and, and in the top menu.

Now I know they'd spent a lot of money for that, and it— but my feeling was, didn't anybody try to use it? Didn't anybody try to read it?

Now while WAVE accessibility does not test that people can read it, it does test for other accessibility type things. Some of which can affect your SEO standings, but also the contrast. So you may think, and I did with my previous colour schemes, I thought that my mauve purpley colour back then was fine. No, it wasn't.

Using that WAVE accessibility test, which is free and online, I will put a note in WAVE.org. I will check and add it in. That WAVE accessibility gives you— it tells you if you've got images loaded that don't have alt text. That isn't good for either people using screen readers or for search engines. It tells you when the contrast is low.

And you may think, well, this is fine. Well, it may be for your eyes. It may not be for everybody. We're about inclusivity. And that includes having your website being usable, being legible.

So this all comes under, the wave comes under maintenance if you've had changes. Now, if you've not done any changes to your website for ages, as in font changes, colour changes, then that's not something you need to do. It's only if you've thought, oh, I want to introduce that orange or green or yellow or whatever colour it may be, or your web designer has said, okay, these are your new branding colours, we've just been through the branding.

Just because a brand colour is in there doesn't mean you have to use it for text.

I say this because I've seen white writing on a yellow background. It was very hard to read.

The contrast just wasn't there.

And I understand that these were 2 of her brand colours. However, they didn't need to be like that.

So actually look for the usability if there have been big changes. If there haven't been big changes, then you don't need to bother with that check. So web maintenance depends on what's been going on as well. There is your basic web maintenance, your speed checks, your updates, obviously your backups before any of that. But then there's your, maybe your online store has been updated.

So you need to run a product test through it just to check everything's still working. Maybe a payment plugin has been updated, so you need to check that. It really does depend on what's going on. An annual check, for example, would be, has the copyright year changed in your footer? That's part of maintenance, but that's an annual thing.

That's not, you know, you don't have to check that every week. So there are like weekly, monthly, annual checks. And on the resources page, if anybody would like it, I'll do the sign up. I've got a web maintenance checklist that purely web maintenance broken down a bit more. And if anybody wants that, I'll put a link to that on there.

Web care. I realise it's not as exciting as doing your colours, as creating the right images or getting everything together. But it is making sure that all that hard work that you've done, all that alignment that you've done, is there for your web visitors. It's making it easy. When we talked about strategy earlier, We were talking about, I mean, earlier as in a few weeks ago, we were talking about making it easy for your web visitor to go through the process.

Web maintenance is part of that.

Broken links. It's not something I would check every week, but it's certainly something you wanted to check every month, every quarter. Again, depending on what changes

you've done. If you have decided, oh, you know what, all of those blog posts under that category are no longer relevant and you remove them from your website, that would be a good time to check for broken links because you may have got links from one blog post to another and now one of them you've deleted.

Because you don't want broken links. It's not good for search engine optimisation. It's really not good for your web visitors.

If you're unclear on any of this, yeah, I'll be doing some more shorter videos during the week as usual. And of course, on Friday, there will be the Facebook Live.

DM me, email me, attend the Facebook Live. Get your questions to me. I'm happy to answer them.

Hopefully, I was gonna say I've convinced, but maybe cajoled you into thinking that web maintenance is important.

There's also malware checks to make sure there's no malware on your system.

You can also check for abandoned plugins with a plugin itself called Wordfence.

Even if you do the basic maintenance, that's a good thing. It's a brilliant thing. Then you can add on checking for malware. And maybe I'll do a separate video on that. About malware and checking for abandoned plugins because they can slow down your website.

I will leave that with you for now.

That was obviously the longer version for WordPress Demystified Week 4, Web Care for Your Business Sustainability. Your website is an asset.

Until the next video, bye for now. And of course, keep shining.