

All I learned about WordPress

I learned at camp

This blog is hosted on a website built on WordPress. Lots of blogs, and many websites, are built using WordPress because it is easy to use and easy to customize. Because WordPress makes it so easy to update your content, there are more organizations using WordPress as a content management system (CMS). If you use software such as Dreamweaver to build a website, you probably have to call your “web person” to ask him/her to make updates.

WordPress has built quite a large community of users and developers, many of whom have regular meet ups and discussion groups. A very popular (and fun) way to get a large group of WordPress enthusiasts together is WordPress “camp.” These camps happen year round in cities worldwide. All are volunteer run.

This past weekend I attended Word Camp Philadelphia, and last month I went to Word Camp in Baltimore. I am trying to learn all I can about WordPress since I don’t have an IT department or anybody handling my website (which is a long story).

I learned a lot at Word Camp Philadelphia (and kudos to the organizers who made this volunteer run event run smoothly and professionally). Here are some main takeaways:

Make security a priority

All websites are vulnerable to hacking. There are several steps you can take to minimize the risk. Among them:

- Do not use admin as your log on name
- Have a strong password
- Always update to the newest version of WordPress

- Be sure your plugins are compatible and updated

Backup often

We heard this time and time again—make your back ups happen automatically. There are many plugins (free and paid) that make this easy. The one mentioned by many presenters was BackupBuddy.

Plugins are cool

Plugins are little programs that add functionality to your WordPress site. There are thousands of plugins available for download from WordPress.org, providing the ability to share posts, create backups, and add lots of bells and whistles. You should keep plugins updated, and you should remove any you aren't using. Too many plugins can slow a website down, and create issues.

A few that were mentioned repeatedly were:

- All in One SEO pack
- AntispamBee
- Akismet
- Yet Another Related Post (YARPP) (running on this site)
- Digg Digg (for social sharing)

Content is crucial

If you don't have interesting and relevant content on your blog/website, why would anybody want to visit? Keep in mind that people don't like to read long chunks of text (as Jess Ostroff from Don't Panic Management put it: **TL;DR**, which stands for too long; didn't read). Also, to avoid long uninterrupted text is why we break up content using headings, bullets and images. To organize your content, you should use some sort of content management system. Jess Ostroff

recommended DivvyHQ.com (paid) or the WordPress Editorial Calendar (free).

Websites should be accessible

There is such a thing as making your website “handicapped accessible.” For example, blind people use web readers to visit websites. If you have images on your website, you should make sure to add alt text so that these readers can include a description of these images.

Another type of accessibility is for mobile devices. The newest version of the simple WordPress theme (Twenty Twelve) adjusts the dimensions of your website to make it fit to a mobile phone screen.

WordPress: it's not just for blogging anymore!

The most important takeaway is that WordPress is not just for blogging. Large organizations have already migrated their websites to a WordPress platform.

Go to camp already!

If you are interested in learning more about WordPress, I highly recommend going to Word Camp. However, not all camps are created equal and it may be worth it to travel to a camp that is well organized.