

Website Security: This Excites me!

Sitting trying to find my php.ini for my local WordPress multi-install, and getting frustrated that I know I found it, and I changed the value I needed to change, but it isn't show up as changed, I get an en email. It only contains one thing, but a beautiful thing:

Dear Site Admin,

*A host, **198.154.227.219**, has been locked out of the WordPress site at <http://pureheartcenter.com> due to **too many attempts to access a file that does not exist.***

Then I sit back and reflect a little on why I am busting my ass doing this work. All the training, all the classes, and all the reading. On top of that trying to find new clients. All whist dealing with being at the end of a horrendous Chemo and Radiation treatment for Cancer, (did I get the medal yet?) Then the Universe shows up with this. It may not mean a lot to most of you readers, but it means the world to me. It means that I am learning a little about website security, and the things I am implementing are paying off. Happy days.



I had two such emails yesterday for a client site, and I had no problems sharing it with them. I enjoyed letting them know that they are now protected. This particular client had been hacked badly, her site had been down for 2 months, and she was losing money before she found us. So we fixed her up, and now she can rest assured that things are working on her behalf, and she can get on with focussing on her own stuff, and leave the running of the website to us.

The client in question is hosting with a notoriously bad host that a lot of people use because they appear to be cheap up front, and they are a popular domain registration website as well. So heck, why not do everything in the one place, right? This host has been getting some real bad press lately about it's inability to stop spammers and hackers, but why would that be an issue for them since they have a product they can sell you for that should such an event occur, mmmmmmm.

There are a few ‘too big to fail’ companies out there doing the very same thing. That is why small personal touch companies such as BarbApple Studios need to band together, and work a little harder at getting through to these clients to show them that there is a better, smarter way to take care of their website.

This hacker was thwarted by two plug-ins, two not so measly plug-ins with I will cover in a minute. A plugin that was correctly installed and configured. Hey that’s what you pay us for, and this is proof that your money is well spent right? It is the desire to do something well, and to keep at it that should drive us. If what you are doing sucks, then do something else. If you can’t stop doing what you are doing, then do that something else at the same time until you can transition over to it.



iThemes
Security



WordFence
Security

The plug-ins in question are *Wordfence*, and *iThemes Security*, and these are in my ‘recommended plug-ins’ article. These are a must install in my humble opinion on every website. They match all 5 of my 5 Step Criteria as to when to install a plug-in. I will post the 5 step below so that you don’t have go to another article to read them.

There are other things I look for, but these are my top 5. Don’t be shy about leaving a comment on what you think is important for a plug-in. I am open to new

things.

BarbApple Studios 5 Step Criteria for the Installation of a Plug-in

1. Do you really need it

1. Sometimes we do install plugins for a reason other than necessity. That reason, and we all do it, is just because it's cool. I have nothing against have these cool plug-ins on a website as long as they don't break my 5 rules. Even a plug-in that I feel my site really needs is not implemented unless it passes the tests.

2. Does it rate high

1. This doesn't help newer plug-ins.
2. Those ones that have just been born and look like they are going to grow up into something really useful.
3. This is where you make a choice as to whether or not you think it is worth.
4. If it works then go and rate it so you can contribute to the rating portion of the 5 Step Criteria.

3. Is it updated on a regular basis

1. Does it say "Not tested with your particular version of WordPress" when you look at the details portion of the plugin?

4. Do they offer a decent free version and a paid version

1. Does the free version actually have enough features turned on to check out what it can do properly?
2. Does the paid version offer enough of a change, and add something you can use that would enhance your site even more?

5. How fast is their technical support

1. Send an email to support and see how fast they get back to you
2. Sometimes this can go back to number 4. Maybe the fast technical support is only in the paid version. I have seen that in some plugins.

But even the basic configuration of these plug-ins will help you slow down any attempt at malicious entry into your website. Nothing is perfect, and I am sure there are those of you out there that could do a better job, but what we do

here at BarbApple Studios works, and works well. It doesn't take long to read their installation and configuration documentation anyway if you wanted to tweak them further. So take the time with these plug-ins and you won't be disappointed with the results.

My Overhead as a WordPress Developer

My Overhead as a WordPress Developer

What is the true cost of doing business as a WordPress developer? As I learned about how to make having a website a better experience for my clients, I realised that the journey I was embarking upon as a website and WordPress developer was going to cost me a lot of well spent time, *yet would be sponsored by aspirin*. Whilst I decided my goal would be how to keep the costs down for my clients, I realized that it would cost me more money with the things that I would need to develop their websites properly.

By this I mean using premium themes, proper hosting, good analytics, and solid security integration, to name but a few. So I spent some time adding up what I would have to pay per client, although some of the places I have to shell out money to would cover several clients as the fees were not on a per client basis. My main intent was to write a private post on my own website, about WordPress Development, what it was costing me, but keep it for my own information. As I wrote I thought, no, let's see if I can wrangle my usually scattered morphine addled thoughts into a post that people may find useful. Also it would help me because I know there are those of you out there that may have better thoughts on this process, and help me tweak it with your experiences.

This article isn't meant as a rebuttal to anything, it is to answer a question

that I have been asked many times about why a small business like mine, that has the ability to work anywhere, charges what it does. Yes it is true, while there are perks to being able to work from home, there are also downsides to it, and one of those is is that I can work from home.



Some clients in the past actually believe that I charged too much for my work, when like most of us, I can't because of competition; which is healthy. Compared to the big developers I may be a little higher on some things, so my intention for this article is to clear up a few things in this area. Larger development companies with a large client base can afford to drop their rates when it comes to their WordPress Development because they have deals with overseas web designers that will work for \$5 to \$10 per hour. This saves the corporation lots of money to spend on advertising, and the like.

Some of them skimp on technical support, which is also farmed out overseas to people that have little to zero interest in whether or not your website runs efficiently. A lot of the technical support staff have no real knowledge of your project, just that you need help with it, and they have a script in front of them that may or may not get you up and running the way you think. You will end up settling for what you get, and I hear this story time and time again.

While you think you are saving money, you really aren't, because a local developer can give you the following:

- Invested service and support
- Training
- Faster service
- Tweaks and subtle changes to your website
- Piece of mind because we have less clients to worry about
- Our ability to under promise and over deliver
- Generally give you more than your moneys worth than a larger development company
- the fact that we have something to prove

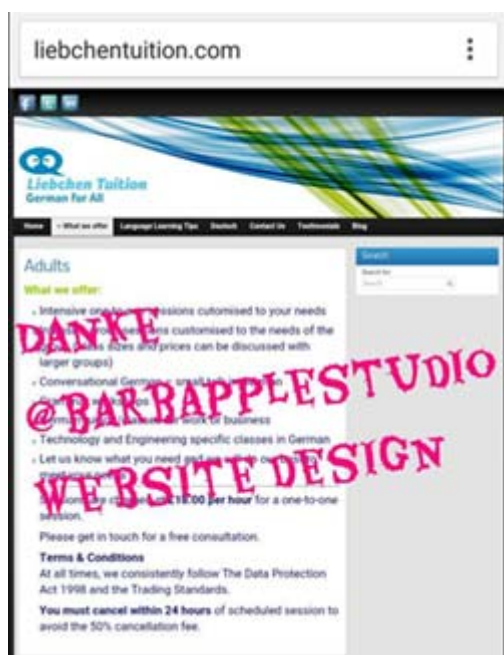
I know there are probably some benefits in going with larger companies as well, but I always err on the side of the small business person. They are

responsible more for our economy than you would think, and are a huge resource for keeping the work, and the money, in our local community. In your business, you would probably hope that this holds true for you too when people decide to shop for goods and services.

“While small businesses may not generate as much money as large corporations, we are a critical component of, and major contributor to, the strength of local economies. Small businesses present new employment opportunities and serve as the building blocks of the United States’ largest corporations.”[by J. Mariah Brown, Demand Media](#)

Every WordPress developer or designer is different as far as where their money goes to develop their business or their skills. I can only show you what I have researched on the subject, and my own experiences as to what I have to pay in order to keep up to date with the times, and my clients needs. This is by no means a definitive list, and is based on my experience with it. If you have a place in your business where you are spending money, let me know in the comments below.

Here is a short-list of my over-heads, and why I can justify the fees that I charge a client.



Mortgage and bills: This is a given. Keeping a roof over my family’s head is important to me

Food: Keeping my family fed is a big priority for me, as it is with any developer. We are not all sitting in our bedrooms with a bowl of noodles drinking soda, and playing video games in our spare time. I am 55 years old and those were the days, just not today's.

Hosting: This costs me money, because I use hosting services that are designed with businesses in mind. It costs a little extra, but we still manage to keep the cost to you low.

Design time: You would like to think that everything goes smoothly in a design of a website, but it doesn't matter how good you are or how long you have been doing it, things will go askew from time to time. If you go with a good developer or designer, like Barbapple Studios, we can sometimes eat the cost of this ourselves.

Classes I take: These are the ongoing classes that make me a better WordPress developer and designer. Any new ideas and innovations, we generally give to existing clients for no charge. You might find your site getting faster, or drawing more business by some of the things we do as they become available to us through our keeping up to date with what's going on out there.

Travel: Sometimes I have to travel by land and air to go to gatherings of like minded people that I know will help me streamline my business, so I can do the same for you, the client. I know this doesn't happen that often, but often enough to mention it here.

Payment for software: With every job, there are tools, and these tools are expensive. They are more expensive for designers than they usually are for the general consumer. They are more robust and have pieces to them that only a designer would use. That is why, as a designer, I don't use consumer tools to build a website, I use proper designer based tools.

Subscription to on-line resources: This brings me more up to date information about what is going on out there, and goes hand in hand with the Classes that I take, and are usually more current. Some of us are actively resourcing, marketing by going to leads groups, writing for advertising, and education purposes. We spend our free time reading other Blogs and websites researching material for ourselves, our fellow developers, and our clients. We are constantly researching, and filling our own Blogs with the information we find, in the hopes that

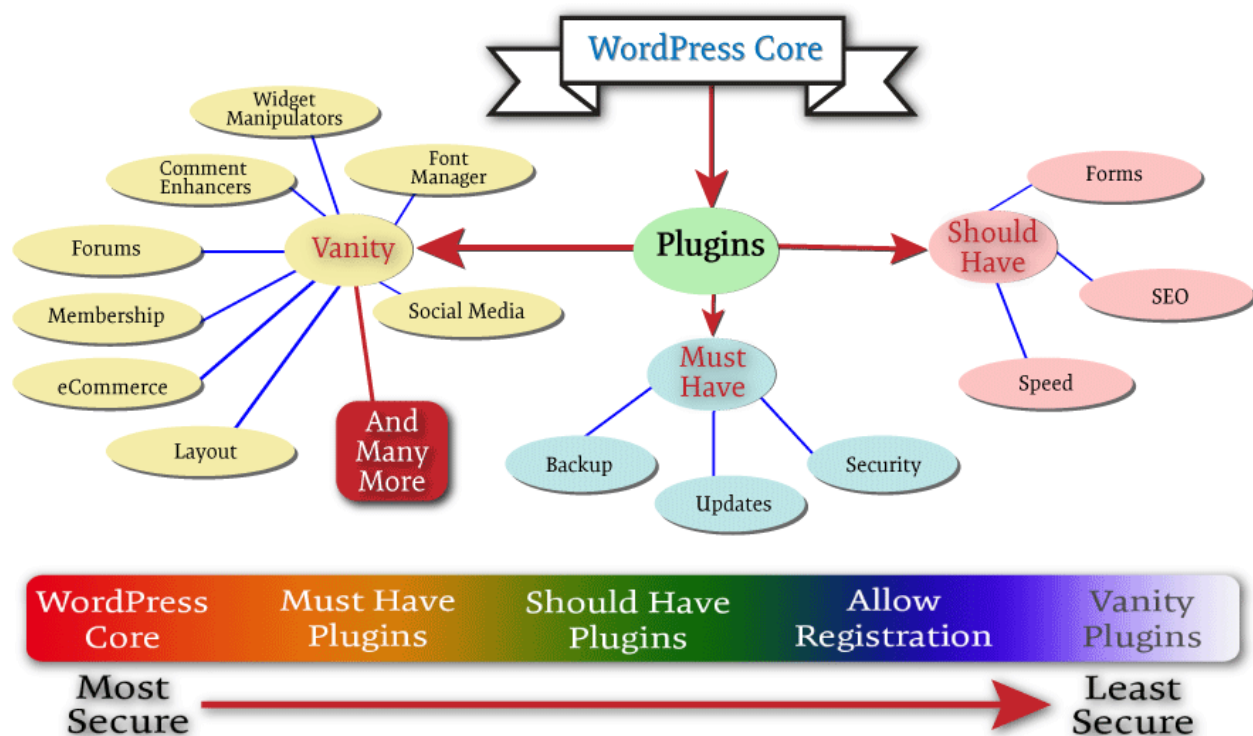
somebody else finds the information useful.

Office Supplies: This is also a given for most people. In every business, there is an office overhead, and I only add it as a part where there is physical product that we use that need to be taken into consideration.

There are other expenses such as initial consults, business lunches, and other meetings with clients that do not get billed, and I try to work them into the price of the site so that there are no hidden charges. That is the last thing that a client wants at the end of the day, is to think they have settled on a price, when all of a sudden there are other charges that they didn't anticipate or didn't think they agreed to. At this point i will mention how important it is to me to have a contract signed by you and your developer. I have such a contract, and I will post it for you to look at here.

So as a WordPress developer and designer give yourself a pat on the back for the work that you do if you are making a good living from it, or indeed trying to build a business from it. As a customer, remember that I have these things always following me around. My goal, as the person that creates your website, is to make you happy not undermine you, and to help you to grow your business, not throw it away.

Types of WordPress Plugins I Should Use



WordPress plugins tree

As you can see from the above chart, it is more like the family tree of plugins off the main WordPress core. The explanation and the presentation of it is my interpretation of the WordPress plugin hierarchy. I know some of you may not agree, some of you will, and even more of you will think it is over simplified, but that's the kind of thing I meant to convey.

The WordPress core itself is extremely secure, and by that I mean as secure as any content management system, CMS out there can be. Since it is written and updated by developers, and has a whole community behind it helping its validity, it is one of the most secure CMS's out there today. It has checks and balances because of it.

The WordPress core, (red,) is the most secure version of your site. As it moves to the right and you keep adding more and more things, such as plugins, it gets less secure, (white.) Coming off of the green into the blue area denotes a website that is more vulnerable to breaking and/ or getting hacked. My best advice is to make sure security is in place, and research your vanity plugins thoroughly before installing them.

Must have plug-ins: These are the plugins in my book that I feel no WordPress

website should be without. This will definitely vary from person to person, and from developer to developer. These are the plugins that I recommend, and I am totally open to this changing as I learn more or hear better arguments. That can happen a lot in this business, and one of the coolest thing about WordPress. In this area I have the following categories: **Backups, Updating, Security, and Anti-spam.**

Should have WordPress plugins: These are the plugins that you will install after you have finished installing and testing the plugins on the “Must have” list. This section, plus the previous section will give you a fully functioning interactive site, with the bare minimum of headache when you are trying to keep your site secure. I have included the following categories in this area: **SEO, Caching, Responsiveness, and Forms.** Personally I don’t think you can do without any of the plug-ins from either of the above areas. This, to me, is a full site if you are looking to have a functional, interactive site, that also has the chance to be discovered in the web.

Vanity WordPress plugins: Believe it or not, this is a favourite section of mine. I do like my Vanity plugins, because some of them are really cool, add value, and most are very well supported. I am not one of those developer that will poo-poo you because you want to add vanity plugins to your website. If I am designing your website you just have to abide by my rules when it comes to any plugins in this category. You just have to be careful how you choose a Vanity plugin, and what purpose it is supposed to serve on your site.

I have created a table for you to look at with specific examples of plugins I use that fall into each of the areas. Also when adding a new plugin directly from the list below, I have outlined the procedure below, and this procedure should work most of the time, but otherwise it is very easy to figure out:

1. Click the link to the plugin
2. Download the plugin to your hard-drive
3. Go back into your “Admin” section of your site
4. Select “Plugins”
5. Select “Add New”
6. Select “Upload Plugin” at the top of the page
7. Click the “Choose file” button
8. Find the plugin on your hard-drive - highlight file and select Open,

(usually in your downloads folder.)

9. Click the "Install Now"
10. Activate plugin
11. Re-read documentation on the plugin to know how it sets itself up on your computer
12. Check that plugin is there and configure it

Video coming soon on how to download and install a plugin

Area	Category	Specific plugin (* = Best in my book)
Must Have	Backup	Backup Buddy * No free version BackWPU * - Free
	Updating	iThemes Sync * Free - on-line service JetPack Monitor Free - on-line service ManageWP * Monthly subscription - on-line service
	Security	iThemes Security * Free and paid version Sucuri * No free version - on-line CloudFlare * Free and paid version - on-line service Really Simple CAPTCHA - Free
	Anti-Spam	Akismet - * Free and comes with WordPress
Should Have	SEO	WordPress SEO by Yoast * Free and paid version
	Caching	W3 Total Cache * - Free and paid version P3 (Plugin Performance Profiler) - Free
	Responsiveness	WP Touch * - Paid version JetPack Mobile theme - Free
	Forms	Gravity Forms * - No free version Contact Forms 7 * Free
Vanity	Editor	WPEdit * Free
	Social buttons	Floating Social Bar * Free SumoMe - Free and paid version - On-line service with plugin
	Widgets	Display Widgets - Free
	Media Library	Enhanced Media Library - Free
	Typogrphy	Google Font Manager - Free Hide Title - Free No Page Comment - Free Yet Another Related Posts Plugin - Free

There are definitely tons more plugins than this, but this will give you a basic idea of the areas that you will most likely need to fill first. Whatever you are looking for can be found by following the steps above the table for finding a plugin or a type of plugin. Let's say you have an idea and you want to see if there is a plugin exists that might help, then type it in.

Remember that a bad plugin has the potential of crashing your site. So when you install a plugin, always check that your site is working after **EACH** install. Don't install 5 or 6 plugins, and then check your site. If it isn't working, then there is no way to tell which plugin was responsible. So take your time and test, test, test as much as you can. Try and limit the number of plugins you install, and delete the plugins that you are not using. Also delete any themes that you aren't using as well. This can help the possible chances that a hacker can get to your website, but all of this is discussed in another article with this site, when I talk about how to tighten up, or lock down your site.

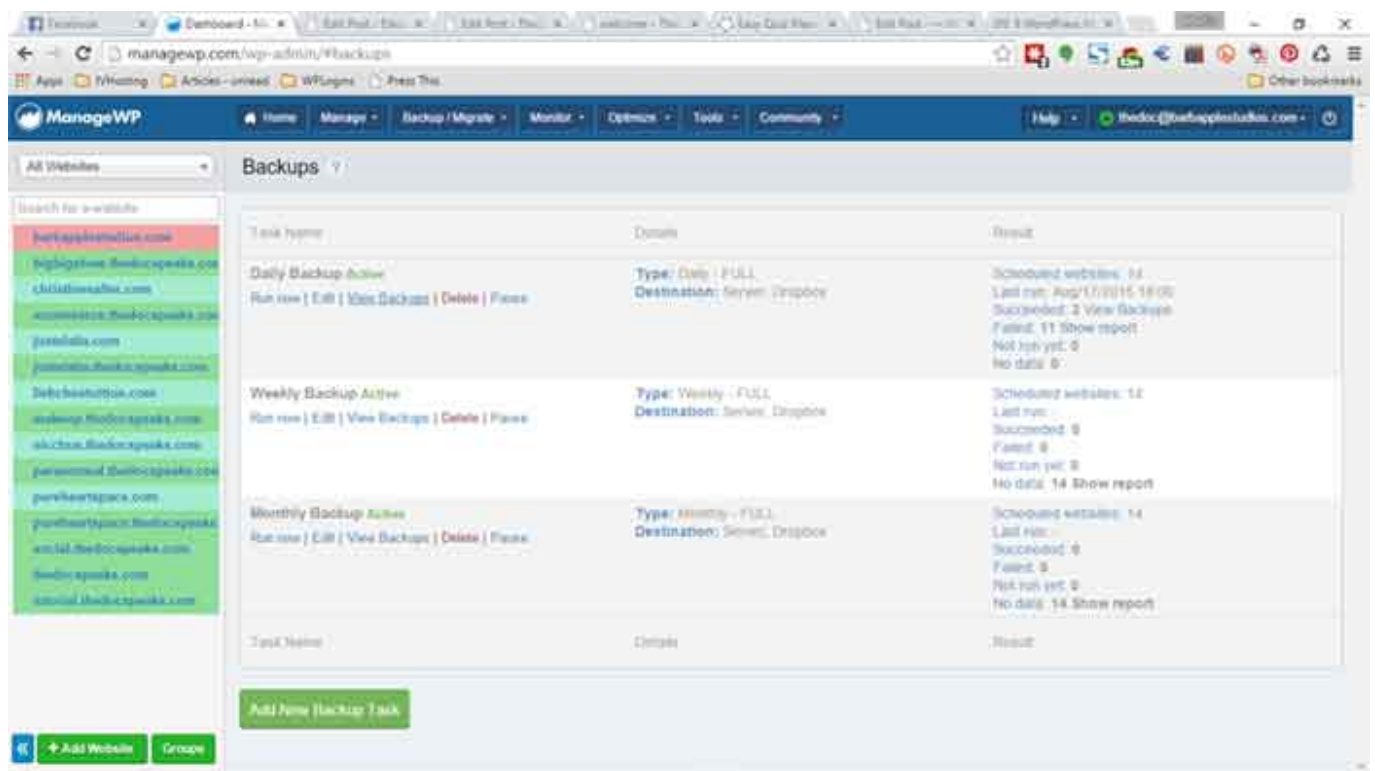
Awesome news with ManageWP

I was sitting here in my pajamas at 5 am in the morning, tired and wide awake, and go to my favorite website right now to find out if did what I asked it to do while I was asleep. YES! It did! When does that ever happen? Well tonight it did, and raised the bar a little bit as far as I am concerned as to what I look for in a website. It was a reminder to me why, as a developer, we need to charge for what we do. This isn't a big name company, but if it continues to do what its doing as efficiently as it has then we are looking at a contender here, at least in my book. So much so that it warranted me to write a review, and have as many people experience this Disney World of websites as possible. It is also a reminder of what a geek I truly am.



As a web designer, I am inundated with emails promising me that if I use a particular piece of software, my life will get easier. I buy this pitch time and time again like a dog begging for treats, yet all it gets is a pat on the head at the end. Sometimes it gets the treat, so it is worth the constant humiliation when it does. If you stay in the game long enough a gem like ManageWP comes along. And Yes, I became an affiliate because I'm not as slow as people think, although I do choose with whom I affiliate with very carefully.

On with it web geek, give us the story Father Mc Grory, and enough of this incessant rambling. OK, it is called ManageWP and it does the following for me right now - It manages WordPress, MY WordPress.



Manages all my websites in the following way:

- Tracks my plugins and themes and whether they need updating or not, and will update them from there
- Uptime monitoring
- Daily, Weekly, and monthly backups
- Black and white listing checking
- SEO Keyword checking with Google and others

- Clone and Migrate any website
- Client reporting - nice touch!
- Track spam comment in all of the sites

I mean there is a manure truck full of other stuff it can do, but too many to list here. Your best bet is to put on your crash helmet, and your seatbelt so that you can head on over to manageWP and test drive this for yourself. As I said, so far so good with this tool, and finally something that is so useful, I'd be nuts to keep it out of my toolbox.

Oh yeah, before I nod off again, the pricing is very reasonable right now, and does get more inexpensive per site, the more sites you have. As of this writing their price for one website is as follows:

<u>BASIC</u>	<u>PROFESSIONAL</u>
One-click updates One-click login to any dashboard Install, manage plugins & themes Manual backups \$0.80 per website / Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard features + • + Scheduled backups (including to Amazon S3, Dropbox, Google Drive) • + Clone wizard • + Client reports • + Google Analytics integration \$2 per website/ month

So there you have it - [give it a try](#), and let me know your comments about it below.

Ten things I do

These are the ten things that I do when I initially start on a clients website. These can vary and some other thing may be done depending on the scope of the project. Most of these are must haves, and others are dependent on the clients needs. But number 10 is a must and happens on every build. Have fun.

1. Change admin user name to something else
2. Install iThemes Security. Run Scan and set it up
3. Delete unused plugins and themes
4. Install W3 Total Cache, and configure it.

5. Install a good backup plugin like BackUp Buddy by or BackWPup, and back up the website.
6. Change permalinks, and other aspects of the settings tab.
7. Make sure the theme, and the plugins I use are well supported.
8. Delete all default pages, posts, and comments
9. Install SEO by Yoast - if client wants search engine work
10. Make some tea or coffee.

This is not all I do, but I make sure these 10 things are definitely done.