

My Overhead as a WordPress Developer

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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*. Whist 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:

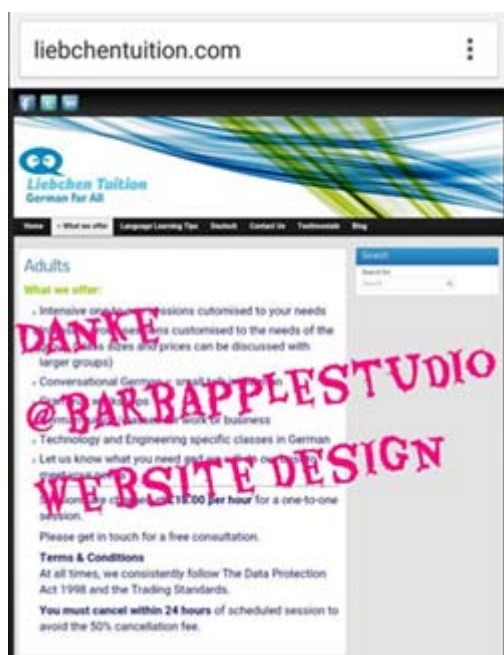
- Invested service and support
- Training
- Faster service
- Tweaks and subtle changes to your website
- Piece of mind because we have less clients to worry about
- Our ability to under promise and over deliver
- Generally give you more than your moneys worth than a larger development company
- the fact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

Wanna Find a Plug-in?

I re-worked this wonderful compilation of plugins I have come across. Some of them will be old, so let me know, and I will try to keep an updated list. My favourites are among these, but I have probably test-driven all of them at some point. I have also left out some of the more obvious ones, and it's fine to bring my attention to those as well.

So if you have a plug-in you would like to see on the list feel free to post it in the comments section below along with anything else you might have to say. This list will be changing from week to week and I will be adding new information as I get ideas of what to include, and I will be tweeting the changes so make sure [you are following me on twitter](#).

I am also not rating which I think are best at the moment, but it is on the cards when I review this list for plugin additions, so if you see an asterisk, or other form of rating mechanism, then that means I have started doing just that. So check your twitter feed under [@barbapplestudio](#)

A really nice resource for searching for plugins based on category, downloads, votes, etc is:

<http://wpplugindirectory.org/>

“Google Trends for .org Plugins” - Simple tool to compare free WordPress.org plugins side-by-side:

<https://bestfreewpplugin.com/>

Custom Post Types

- <http://www.wp-types.com>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/cpt-onomies/>
- <http://pods.io/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/my-content-management/> — Lesser known, not great for clients, but still powerful for developers and free.

Custom Fields

- <http://www.advancedcustomfields.com/>

OPTIMIZATION

For Images

- <http://jetpack.me/support/photon/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/ewww-image-optimizer/>
- <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/wp-smushit/>
- <https://wordpress.org/plugins/imsanity/>

For Managing When Plugins or Scripts Load

- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/css-javascript-toolbox/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/plugin-organizer/>

For Caching

- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/w3-total-cache/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-super-cache/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/hyper-cache/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/cloudflare/>

- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/em-object-cache/>
- <http://wp-rocket.me/> (Premium — free version on it's way soon)

SEO

- <http://www.prelovac.com/vladimir/wordpress-plugins/seo-friendly-images>
- <http://www.vretoolbar.com/news/seo-slugs-wordpress-plugin>
- <http://yoast.com/wordpress/seo/>
- <http://www.weberz.com/plugins/404-redirected/>

Google Analytics Dashboard

- <https://wordpress.org/plugins/google-analytics-dashboard-for-wp/>

Sliders

- <http://soliloquywp.com>
- <http://codecanyon.net/item/slider-pro-wordpress-premium-slider-plugin/253501>
- <http://shouldiuseacarousel.com/>
- <http://codecanyon.net/item/layerslider-responsive-wordpress-slider-plugin-/1362246>
- <http://dimsemenov.com/plugins/royal-slider/wordpress/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/infinite-slider/>

Full Screen Background Sliders

- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-supersized/>

Social Sharing

- Social Sharing Toolkit
<http://www.blogaid.net/social-media-widget-plugin-injecting-spam> Video tutorial to help folks switch from the Social Media Widget plugin over to Social Sharing Toolkit and configure it.

Security

- iThemes Security (formerly Better WP Security)
<http://wordpress.org/plugins/better-wp-security/>
- BruteProtect <http://wordpress.org/plugins/bruteprotect/>

- Wordfence Security <http://wordpress.org/plugins/wordfence/>
- All In One WP Security and Firewall <http://wordpress.org/plugins/all-in-one-wp-security-and-firewall/>

Spam

- <http://bad-behavior.ioerror.us/>
- <http://www.itquad.com/wordpress/plugins/wp-email-guard>

Event

- <http://wp-events-plugin.com/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/the-events-calendar/>
- <https://wordpress.org/plugins/all-in-one-event-calendar/>

RSS Aggregation / Feed to Post Import

- <http://www.wprssaggregator.com>

Frontend Post/Registration

- <http://wedevs.com/plugin/wp-user-frontend-pro/>

Forms

- <http://www.gravityforms.com/>
- <http://contactform7.com/>
- <http://formidablepro.com>
- <http://ninjaforms.com>

Backup/clone

- <https://wordpress.org/plugins/duplicator/>

Newsletter

- <https://wordpress.org/plugins/wysija-newsletters/>

Sidebar

- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/content-aware-sidebars/>
- <http://wordpress.org/plugins/woosidebars/>

This is by no means a definitive list but it will be growing and I will be [posting it on twitter for sure.](#)

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.