Growing WordPress by Reducing Complexity & Fragmentation

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WordCamp Phoenix
Who Am I?

- Head of WordPress @ GoDaddy
- WordPress Cape Cod Meetup Organizer
What’s in this talk for you?

- Develop a better understanding of WordPress growth.
- Leverage these learnings to make better decisions with your site, clients or your plugin/theme business.
WordPress Growth
WordPress is big & growing...

### CMS Market Share

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WordPress</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joomla</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
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<td>9.3%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopify</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
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<td>Drupal</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
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<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
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<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<td>3.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squarespace</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wix</td>
<td>&lt;0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
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<td>1.8%</td>
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</table>
...but growth isn’t guaranteed.
Competitors Are Growing Fast

Competitors make it increasingly difficult to reach 50% - 75% market share.
Website Alternatives Are Also Growing (& Don’t Show Up in Our Data)
The *highly* optimistic view of market share.

Projections below extrapolated from historical data using non-CMS share as a proxy.
To sustain WordPress growth, we must understand it.
Historical WordPress Growth Factors (2003-2014)

Historical Growth Overdetermined
- Open source, community, ubiquitous LAMP stack, easy install, etc.

Key Historical Growth Factors
- **Strong Market & Early Product Market Fit**
  - Fast internet growth
  - Rise of blogs in 2000’s
    - Six Apart licencing change for MT
  - Evolved into CMS to capture website growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Plugins</th>
<th>Themes &amp; Pages</th>
<th>Custom Post Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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**Strong Organic Growth...**
- Freelancers & Agencies →
- Plugin & Theme Ecosystem →
- Strong Brand →
- Open Source Network Effects →
- Vibrant Community →

**...Across a Large Surface Area**
- Thousands of ambassadors
- 50,000+ plugins, 10,000+ themes
- High name recognition & trust
- Thousands of contributors
- Thousands of WordCamps & meetups
  - 1,000+ WordCamps in 70+ cities
  - 1,600+ meetups with 800,000 members
WordPress Growth is *Different*

**WordPress Growth: Organic**
- Network effects of open source
- Trademark limitations for ads, thus hosts compete for existing WordPress users
- WordPress ad spend/investment complex due to asymmetry & opaqueness

**Site Builder Growth: Mktg Budgets**
- **Shopify** 2018: $326M
- **Wix** 2018: $237M
- **Squarespace** 2018: $150M (est.)

*Total: $713M on Sales & Marketing*

*Top 3 competitors Sales & Marketing spending will soon surpass $1B.*
Organic vs. Inorganic Growth

**WordPress**
Powered by wind (organic)

**Site Builders**
Powered by $$$ (inorganic)
The Nature WordPress Growth

Organic Growth (Wind) = Lift → Drag

Users Succeed → WP Grows
New Users Try WP

Fragmentation Complexity
Lack of Ease Holds Us Back

Fragmentation
Complexity

Users Don’t Succeed
WP Growth Slows
Fewer Users Try WP

Growth of Shopify, Squarespace & Wix 2011 - 2020
It Also Prevents WordPress from Becoming a Solution to Capture More Value

If websites were cars...
Customer: “I Want a Car…”

“Here’s your car, dawg.”
Customer: “I Want a Car…”

WordPress

“Here’s everything you need.”
We Must Leverage Our Strengths to Grow

We can't create more wind, but we can accelerate by 1) better harnessing the wind that powers our growth and 2) reducing drag.

Growth Propellants (lift) →
- Large surface area = many new users try WP
- Massive ecosystem serves long tail needs
- Enabling solutions

← Growth Inhibitors (drag)
- Complexity = fewer new users succeed
- Fragmentation reduces value created
How Gutenberg helps us reduce drag & unlock growth.
WordPress Offers Power & Flexibility...

what users want

what WordPress Does

what Plugins & Themes Do
...at the Cost of Complexity & Fragmentation

A long tail of needs.

\( N \) ways to do \( X \):
- 50,000+ Plugins
- 10,000+ Themes
- 30+ Page Builders
“I wanted to use WordPress, but it was too hard.”

- Albert Einstein
Gutenberg Attempts to Wrangle Complexity

Multipurpose Themes
Page Builders
Shortcodes
TinyMCE
widgets
HTML

A consistent approach.
Everything is a block.
Some real world examples...
Making WordPress
Easy & Performant
Helping New Users Succeed

How do you create a homepage with this?!
Hello world!

Welcome to WordPress. This is your first post. Edit or delete it, then start writing!

Search...

Search

Recent Posts
Hello world!

Recent Comments

Archives

Our approach reflects the people we serve. We are diverse, yet incredibly the same.
More Native Flexibility…(demos)
...Means Doing More with Less Bloat...

All that with just 1 theme & 1 plugin.

Gutenberg raises the bar for a “basic” WordPress site.
...and Better Performance.

Results from unoptimized site in demo on $5 hosting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance grade</th>
<th>Page size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
<td>1.0 MB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Load time 167 ms, Requests 17.
Empowering WordPress Companies to be More Productive & Create More Value
Example: Page Builders

what users want

what WordPress Does

what Page Builders Do

Bad Experience, not standardized & incompatible
30+ Page Builders solving the same problem in different ways.
what Page Builders Do

Flexible Interface

Advanced Customization

THIS enables THAT
what Page Builders Do Did

Flexible Interface

Advanced Customization

Gutenberg

The Next Frontier
Empowers WordPress Ecosystem to Create & Capture More Value
Implications
Implications

- Provides a modern, common foundation for the WordPress ecosystem to build upon.
- Puts more focus on value creation with less duplicative efforts and lower support/maintenance costs.
- Delivers better experiences for WordPress users due to higher interoperability and minimizing unexpected breakage.
Summary
1. How We Grow

Harness Organic WordPress Growth

To grow we must harness the “lift” from the wind that powers growth & minimize the “drag” that slows it.
2. How We Do It

We do this by reducing complexity & fragmentation:

- **Reduce fragmentation** to empower the ecosystem (our unique advantage) to create & capture more value.

- **Reduces complexity** with a consistent, intuitive approach making it easier for new users to succeed.
3. What We Get

- Make new users more likely to succeed & stick with WordPress.
- **Better leverage** our unique advantage: our open source ecosystem & network effects.
- **Enable solutions** to increase the value we create and capture.
How Can You Help?
How You Can Help

● Not using Gutenberg? Try it every 6 months.
● Consultant? Have clients use it for posts.
● Developer? Try doing things in standardized ways.
● Everyone: Please share feedback!