

WordPress for enterprise

A guide for prospective buyers



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CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

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Whether you're looking to migrate from an existing publishing platform, move away from a bespoke proprietary system, or simply start fresh, investing in a new CMS is a major undertaking for any enterprise. In a highly competitive market, it can also be difficult to cut through marketing material and sales pitches to get a sense of whether a solution is right for your business.

This guide aims to overcome that challenge by giving you expert insights and an insider overview of the WordPress platform, directly from the people that use it everyday to build large-scale solutions. Created from conversations with many of the world's leading enterprise WordPress agencies, it brings together a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, and highlights how the platform best serves the needs of big brands and global organisations.

For me, the guide also perfectly exemplifies how the platform is supported by a close-knit global community, much to the advantage of the clients we serve. I don't imagine there are many other industries where competing agencies are so keen to collaborate - whether on technical projects or informative documents such as this one - and I'm extremely grateful to everyone who's shared their valuable time and thoughts.

I hope this guide serves as a useful tool in your decision making process, and illustrates how a humble blogging tool has grown to become the ultimate CMS for enterprises that are ready to revolutionise how they create, collaborate and publish digital content.

IAIN MCPHERSON
CEO, BIG BITE



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From small blogs to **big brands**



Developed back in 2003 as the successor to a retired blogging tool, WordPress quickly gained popularity by enabling individuals to easily share thoughts, reviews and ideas online. Just a few years later, a growing number of journalists - from broadsheets and tabloids alike - began to post news and views via blogs, while WordPress expanded its functionality to enrich the publishing experience. By 2013, the platform had not only evolved to offer a much broader range of features, themes and plugins, it had also established itself as the world's most popular CMS - a title that it still holds today.

Although seemingly a major shift in direction, the progression was largely organic. **"If you're putting out news stories, it's not actually that different than putting out a blog,"** explains Michael Khalili, Director of Product Marketing at WordPress VIP. **"The capabilities of the WordPress platform evolved from there to be able to handle some additional design and additional capabilities that you would need to make it really into a news website. WordPress VIP took WordPress to the next level handling the biggest news websites out there, and then corporate marketers - especially as content marketing became more of a thing - started to adopt WordPress as well. They often started with a blog, and then realised that it was much quicker and easier to publish blog posts with WordPress than create web pages via other platforms, so we introduced additional capabilities to meet the needs of the enterprise."**

CNN

THE  TIMES

VOGUE

V&A

News Corp

NEW YORK POST

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Google



Further revolutionising the publishing process, in 2018 WordPress introduced Gutenberg - its user-friendly block editor that enables non-technical users to create and publish content and web pages in a much more visual, intuitive way. Often described as a game changer, the introduction of the tool was arguably a watershed moment for the WordPress platform, restructuring content into blocks that not only make it easier to produce highly engaging marketing content, but that can also be reused across multiple channels. As a result, WordPress now powers over 40% of the web, and has been widely adopted by major media brands including CNN, Vogue, and News Corp - the publishing powerhouse behind titles such as The Times, New York Post, and The Wall Street Journal. The extensive capabilities of the platform are also leveraged by enterprises operating across a hugely diverse range of sectors, including financial brands, educational institutions and charities such as PayPal, Harvard University and the V&A museum, tech giants such as Google, Spotify, Meta, and PlayStation, and government bodies including the White House and the UK's Civil Service.



“IF YOU’RE PUTTING OUT NEWS STORIES, IT’S NOT ACTUALLY THAT DIFFERENT THAN PUTTING OUT A BLOG”



MICHAEL KHALILI
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT MARKETING
WORDPRESS VIP



Open source **advantages**



WordPress is one of the best known examples of open source software, and by enabling anyone to freely access, modify and distribute its code, it's continued to democratise content creation. In tandem with the global growth of the platform, the wider open source movement has also achieved mainstream adoption, and today counts superbrands such as Microsoft, Google and Amazon as core contributors.

OPEN SOURCE GIVES YOU SOMETHING MUCH CLOSER TO TRUE OWNERSHIP OVER YOUR CODEBASE THAN ANY HOSTED PRODUCTS DO

GABE KARP
MANAGING DIRECTOR
10UP



“Open source is one of the most powerful ideas that has moved across the landscape in the last couple of decades, and it’s a pro for most enterprise brands,” says Michael at WordPress VIP. **“There are a handful that have a strong bias against it, but I would be shocked if there is a large corporation in the world that doesn’t have open source somewhere in its technology stack. We’ve had proprietary software since the days of IBM mainframes and open source is a relatively newer idea, but I think it’s an idea that’s been so established by this point.”**

Flexibility and ownership

Open source isn’t just deemed as a positive, for many organisations it’s now a clear preference according to recent findings published by Red Hat - a leading US software company and subsidiary of IBM.

In its 2022 report, The State of Enterprise Open Source, it highlighted that IT leaders are 82% more likely to select a vendor that contributes to the open source community, largely because they’re familiar with open source processes, keen to help sustain healthy open source communities, and want to influence the development of features.

As well as the flexibility and limitless capabilities of open source solutions, a growing number of enterprise organisations are also recognising the advantages of owning their own roadmap, rather than being fixed into someone else’s, and having greater control of functionality. Gabe Karp, Managing Director of 10up, explains: **“There’s actually more control over your own destiny by using open source than using licensed products. You have access to the codebase and everything you build on top of it is your own IP, versus using a platform like Adobe Experience Manager where if they decide to deprecate a version of it, you can’t keep hosting it yourself.”**

Such ownership also means that organisations can often avoid vendor lock-in, giving them the freedom to move from one agency to another without facing the high risks and costs associated with replatforming.

Global innovation and support

The huge ecosystems and communities behind open source projects are now also more widely regarded as a significant advantage for enterprise organisations, offering faster iterations, global support, battle-tested code, and vast pools of expertise. In 2022 alone, 1399 engineers in over 50 countries contributed to WordPress releases, with the wider community size currently exceeding 100,000 according to its co-founder Matt Mullenweg.

Embracing the principles of open source can also offer benefits that go beyond functionality and applications. Magne Ilsaas, CEO of Dekode, explains: **“We often save hundreds of hours for our clients because we’re using our tool stack, and if we build something custom for an enterprise and we’re allowed to make it available to others, that works both ways so it benefits everyone. To me, the culture and values of open source is even more interesting than the code side, and we’re really trying to reflect that in our client relationships in terms of sharing knowledge, trying to make enterprises self-sufficient, never tying them in, and building flexibility. Also just the way enterprise WordPress agencies are collaborating is beneficial for enterprise clients - I don’t think there are a lot of agencies on other technologies that would share basically everything around operations.”**

Sarah McCormick, COO at Big Bite, agrees: **“Today there are just so many huge brands either creating, contributing to, or leveraging open source projects - including Amazon, Whatsapp, and Netflix - that it’s no longer seen as something on the fringes of tech, it’s very much front and centre. We now also have an entire generation of engineers who have used open source from the very beginning of their careers, and as a result, we’re seeing greater collaboration than ever before. Ultimately, that means faster, more robust solutions for everyone.”**

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THEIR CAREERS

SARAH MCCORMICK
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
BIG BITE



Platform **security**



As the most dominant player in the CMS market, it's currently estimated that WordPress powers around 43% of all websites on the internet, with over 500 new sites being launched on the platform every single day. Over the years, this incredible popularity has unfortunately led to a number of highly-publicised security breaches, as its widespread use greatly increases the probability of attacks and issues. At the same time, however, the platform's high adoption rate means that security issues are quickly detected and rapidly resolved.

“TO GET TO FAST SOLUTIONS, IT'S GENIUS, BUT YOU REALLY NEED TO CONSIDER LONG-TERM GOALS AND WHICH PLUGINS ARE THE RIGHT ONES

Alex Frison, CEO of Inpsyde, explains: **“The good thing and the bad thing about WordPress is that everybody can work with it. I'd say around 95% of the people who are really developing on it are not doing it in the proper way, and then when things go wrong and websites get hacked, or websites are not performing well, and so on, it's easy for them to blame the system instead of admitting fault. It's also easy to add features here and there with additional plugins, but there's no thought about long-term performance, maintenance, security, etc. To get to fast solutions, it's genius, but you really need to consider long-term goals and which plugins are the right ones.”**

While poorly-built sites usually only have a negative impact on their direct owners and users, badly developed themes and plugins can lead to much more widespread damage. As one of the most popular attack methods for hackers, outdated plugins in particular pose a significant risk by opening up businesses to vulnerabilities. Alex continues:

“With the plugins that are out there, there is no signature that they are approved for security issues or anything like that, or forced to update, so on one side WordPress is very liberal which is really good, and that's why it grew so much, but on the other side you should also have some sort of seal to indicate that a plugin has been tested. Unfortunately it's difficult to make this happen because WordPress has such a big community, so people will become frustrated because they don't get the seal or whatever, and there are many, many plugins out there, making it really difficult to manage them all.”



ALEX FRISON
CEO, INPSYDE

Enterprise expertise

Combined, these issues might suggest that WordPress security is lacking, however for large-scale brands that simply isn't the case. In addition to utilising specialist tools that mitigate the vast majority of security challenges - such as WPScan which quickly flags up vulnerabilities - enterprise agencies are extremely vigilant and highly competent when it comes to protecting clients and site users.

Gabe of 10up confirms: "We have an internal list of all the plugins that we have vetted, and we vet every single plugin that we use for security and performance - that should be a public-facing thing because one, it will help other plugins get better and be enterprise-ready, and two, it will help us have the right narrative - don't just go grab this thing over here and use it."

As a result, security is rarely a concern for big brands using or considering WordPress. "WordPress has a strong security track record," says Tom Willmot, CEO of Human Made. "In Red Hat's 2022 State of Open Source report, its findings show that 89% of IT leaders believe enterprise open source is as secure or more secure than proprietary software. That has significantly shifted as there's a sense that there's a global community and the codebase is open and constantly reviewed. The track record of proprietary platforms having major security issues has continued, whereas the open platforms haven't really had that problem. I think WordPress security issues now are mostly contained within plugins and the ecosystems around it which are less mature than the core software. Usually if we're having to convince clients, it's only because they have been convinced that WordPress is insecure by a competing platform."

The number of high profile brands that rely on WordPress is also testament to its robustness, as Michael at WordPress VIP summarises: "Where security is raised as a concern, I often ask, do you really have higher security requirements than the White House? Do you really have higher security requirements than Al Jazeera? That's what we do, we make WordPress work for those types of organisations, and we do that with a platform that we've engineered over a decade to handle the security requirements".

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Scalability and internationalisation

For better agility and user experience - and to avoid hefty replatforming costs later down the line - scalability is a huge consideration when it comes to choosing the right CMS. As a platform that's so closely associated with blogging, there may be the mistaken assumption that WordPress struggles to cope with exceptionally high levels of traffic, queries and content delivery, however every day it comfortably handles scale for the world's biggest publishers.

"We built a platform that scales really as far as you want it to scale," says Michael at WordPress VIP. "A perfect example of that is FiveThirtyEight, which manages a tremendous amount of traffic. Back in 2020, just like everyone else, I was hitting refresh every two seconds on that site to see what the latest projections were."

"We often see that clients initially adopt WordPress for a small blog or event site, as it's considered a quick and cheap solution. Over time organisations have grown to understand the value that WordPress offers them, often exploring to see how they can scale it up to do more. Selecting the right tooling for the job is crucial when scaling WordPress to integrate with other business tools and services" adds Mollie Pugh, Director of New Client Strategy at 10up.

Efficiency at scale

WordPress also offers multisite functionality that enables a limitless number of sites to share core files, which can be particularly advantageous for enterprise organisations that are looking to simplify and standardise publishing processes. Tom at Human Made explains: "The majority of enterprise clients are coming to us for multisite solutions. People come to Human Made - or to WordPress - because they may be moving off a legacy system, but they're also consolidating."

"There was a report that showed that the average enterprise company has 11 CMSs in active use - or something wild like that - and so consolidation is a big thing, because that's an opportunity to bring a bunch of sites from multiple platforms onto one platform, so we do a fair amount of that. I think the fact that WordPress is so easy to go from one to multi - and that it's very flexible when it comes to multisite - is an undersold advantage, especially from a licensing cost point of view. All of the other platforms charge per site and it can get expensive, and that's often why enterprise organisations have so many CMSs, because they take out Adobe because it actually it only makes sense to pay for that for their biggest sites, and find something else for the smaller ones, so they end up with a fragmented install base across the organisation."

SELECTING THE RIGHT TOOLING FOR THE JOB IS CRUCIAL WHEN SCALING WORDPRESS TO INTEGRATE WITH OTHER BUSINESS TOOLS AND SERVICES

MOLLY PUGH
DIRECTOR OF NEW CLIENT STRATEGY
10UP



Inpsyde's Alex Frison agrees: "Multisite is powerful - we have clients that have up to 700 websites on one installation that are completely different or also using synergies. I can put it on a SAP website for example, with several hundred different websites and also different branding, and I could also put a bakery site on there and use the same contact form, and nobody would know about it. Those things are very powerful - you can use synergies but also stay independent and flexible on one installation. That's why multisite is very popular - it enables companies to control their features and core system on a global level, but also give different markets - different countries, different products - the flexibility to use whatever feature or whatever design they like within the limitations of the global level. The biggest multisite is WordPress.com - it has 7 million installations, so you see that it's possible to do great things with it."

Multilingual capabilities

The platform's capacity for internationalisation is another benefit for brands looking to expand in terms of global reach, however content translation functionality needs to be built or integrated on a per solution basis. Brad Campeau-Laurion, CEO of Alley, says:

"We have had to integrate multilingual capabilities into a few sites over the years, and WordPress can't handle a typical enterprise use case out of the box. If you said to an editor that WordPress is multilingual, they are not going to think that means that the CMS interface can be viewed in multiple languages. They're going to see that as 'I can produce content in multiple languages, and if I write the same article in German and French and Spanish and Italian and English, I can keep those five versions of the article canonically linked, WordPress is going to drop the right metatags on there so Google knows that these are all the same article in different languages and not duplicate content, to help with SEO'. That's really basic stuff that could easily be part of WordPress core, but it doesn't do that."

"I've built solutions personally that use a custom taxonomy and some linking between posts, and obviously there's MultilingualPress and other plugins which we've also used, but concerns around the core offering are totally valid. I think the reason that it hasn't been supported is that while it's probably been a real pain for certain enterprise agencies and developers to deal with, in the wider market - thinking about the long tail of WordPress - the use case probably isn't as prevalent as we think it is. I think the solutions to get it implemented are also fairly reasonable though, and some of the plugins are pretty good, but it's certainly something I could see being part of core someday."

EVERY SINGLE
MULTILINGUAL OR
MULTIREGIONAL USE CASE
I'VE COME ACROSS IS A
LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT



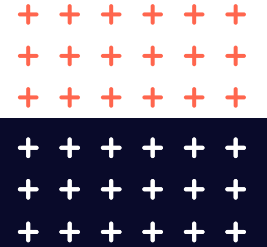
GABE KARP
MANAGING DIRECTOR
10UP

Gabe at 10up has an alternative view: “There’s so much talk about multilingual being something that should be core to WordPress but I’m not convinced. Every single multilingual or multiregional use case I’ve come across is a little bit different. Whether we want to integrate with a third party translation service but we want to have a whole workflow around approving, editing or this, that and the other, I actually think the plugins give you a pretty good set of options for how you want to approach WordPress.”

“What we’re selling isn’t just engineering,” adds Tom Wilmott at Human Made. “It’s knowing how to think conceptually about building a multilingual site and the workflows and editorial experience and at what point translations are happening, and thinking if it’s the same content across multiple languages that’s translated or is there different content and different language experiences.

That starts to be a design problem, a content architecture problem, and it requires us as agencies to know what we’re doing when it comes to multilingual, which I think is also an important part of the challenge and opportunity. It’s more than just technology.”

“The future is bright for multilingualism and WordPress,” says Alex at Inpsyde. “There’s already so much that you can achieve in terms of automatic translations, and I think AI functionality will take multilingual content creation to the next level in the coming months and years, which is pretty exciting for enterprises with international audiences.”



I THINK AI FUNCTIONALITY WILL TAKE MULTILINGUAL CONTENT CREATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN THE COMING MONTHS AND YEARS, WHICH IS PRETTY EXCITING FOR ENTERPRISES WITH INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

ALEX FRISON
CEO, INPSYDE



Solution cost and **value**



While the cost of building an enterprise-level CMS solution varies significantly depending on migration custom functionality, hosting, maintenance, training, and implementation requirements, historically WordPress has been regarded as one of the less expensive options.

“There is still a perception that WordPress will be the cheaper solution, but I think it’s a positioning problem,” says Mollie from 10up. “There is a big difference between an enterprise WordPress build, and installing an off-the-shelf theme, and that mindset still needs to shift a little bit. Engineering at the enterprise level needs to follow best practice at every stage of the process, leading agencies understand that and as a result, they have collectively contributed to the growth of the enterprise WordPress market” she adds.

Magne at Dekode says: “It’s looked upon as a cheaper option in our market. I usually say that it’s not cheap, it’s cost effective - a WordPress project can still be 5,000 hours, but the same project on other platforms would be 10,000 hours.”

Gabe from 10up adds: “I 100% think some people see WordPress as the cheap option, but there’s some value in that at the enterprise level. Some of these big companies have a need to have a second CMS and to launch things quickly and I want WordPress to be there for those things. This is one case where it being all things to all people is actually really powerful. The fact that you can spin up a marketing site really easily and quickly without a developer - once you have a base theme - is really, really different from the other platforms, and we should be seeing that as a value proposition at the enterprise level, even if it’s not the day-to-day.”

IT’S LOOKED UPON AS A CHEAPER OPTION IN OUR MARKET. I USUALLY SAY THAT IT’S NOT CHEAP, IT’S COST EFFECTIVE - A WORDPRESS PROJECT CAN STILL BE 5,000 HOURS, BUT THE SAME PROJECT ON OTHER PLATFORMS WOULD BE 10,000 HOURS



MAGNE ILSAAS
CEO / FOUNDING PARTNER
DEKODE

As the platform's value proposition continues to strengthen, it's no longer guaranteed to be the lowest priced CMS for enterprises, however, significantly the costs involved in developing a WordPress solution cover development time rather than licensing fees. Brad at Alley says: "We don't believe that you should be paying for software, you should be paying for building your product. You shouldn't be spending licensing fees on things you don't need to, save that money to invest in hiring writers, or invest in hiring an agency like one of ours to build the things that are core to your business, but don't pay for software when there is perfectly good open source software out there.

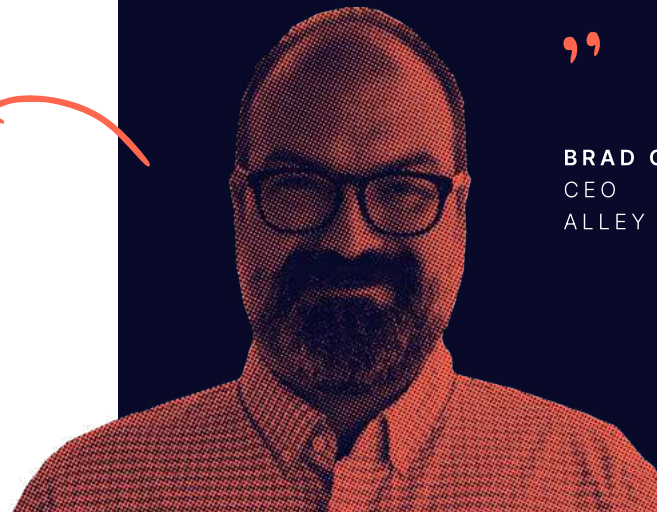
"Cost however is a funny thing, because what I'll see very often is that we may come out more expensive head to head versus Arc or Brightspot, because those platforms are willing to offer deep discounts to sign on in exchange for a multi-year contract, but who knows what your price is going to be at the end of that contract. To me that's the scariest thing. You're locked into another platform's roadmap for a lot of features - there are customisations you can do of course, but not to everything, and if you really don't like the way that something works, or if you don't like certain providers that they've chosen for certain services that you can't otherwise replace, you're in trouble. Also, at the end of that first contract, what are your rates going to look like? To me, that's terrifying, and if I was a publisher, that's not the ecosystem I would want to be locked into.

WE DON'T BELIEVE THAT
YOU SHOULD BE PAYING
FOR SOFTWARE, YOU
SHOULD BE PAYING FOR
BUILDING YOUR PRODUCT

"Some organisations are also paying too much money for a fraction of the feature set, and that fraction of the feature set probably isn't that good and the site has terrible core web vitals scores too, so overall it's probably not a good experience, and not a great investment."

Tom at Human Made agrees: "The comparison with other solutions can be somewhat complex because these platforms do a hell of a lot more, they give you a lot of other pieces, so the way they evaluate that can work in WordPress's favour because actually these platforms aren't just selling you a CMS, they're selling you a customer data platform and all these other pieces, and maybe all you actually need is the website, or all you've got is a plan for is the website to begin with. With these other platforms there can be a sense that you're buying a bunch of stuff that you don't need, whereas with WordPress you can pick and choose the bits you don't want.

"We find that a lot of the big clients that come to us after paying for a big DXP, got sold on the feature set, but ultimately they end up not really doing most of the stuff, so they're doing a very small amount of personalisation on just one website, and this omnichannel, massive dream that they've been sold doesn't really materialise. It's then that they realise that instead of paying £2m per year for this type of solution, they could just roll out some WordPress websites. Usually those come in kind of expecting it to be good enough, but perhaps not as good as what they've had previously, and then usually they're actually really pleasantly surprised, if not blown away, by how much you can achieve with WordPress."



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BRAD CAMPEAU-LAURION
CEO
ALLEY INTERACTIVE

Editorial experience

Alongside technical robustness, strong security and near limitless scalability, user experience is a priority for a growing number of large-scale organisations. As such, the 2018 release of Gutenberg - WordPress's intuitive block editor - proved to be a key milestone in the platform's adoption as an enterprise CMS. Developed to put more control in the hands of non-technical users, the block editor has revolutionised the content creation process by making it possible to put together media-rich pages and posts through a much more visual experience. Utilising modern JavaScript, Gutenberg's drag and drop interface enables users to easily build complex posts, pages and websites using predefined blocks, which can range from simple elements such as page titles through to content-rich functionality including galleries and dynamic news feeds.

WE CAN ENABLE ANYONE
WITHIN AN ORGANISATION
TO CREATE NEW POSTS
AND PAGES WITHIN A
MATTER OF MINUTES, AND
DRAMATICALLY REDUCE
THEIR DEPENDENCE ON
ENGINEERING
RESOURCES

SARAH MCCORMICK
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
BIG BITE



Tom at Human Made comments: "Ultimately a good publishing experience is a good publishing experience, so I think Gutenberg has been great for enterprise users as well as individual users. While it wasn't designed to address an enterprise use case, and it didn't come from a stance of 'what could WordPress build to be a better enterprise CMS', just the fact that the core publishing experience is such a huge part of WordPress - and ultimately Gutenberg is really good - has been great, and there's just been a tonne of overlap."

"Ease of use is definitely one of the main reasons why enterprise organisations choose WordPress," adds Michael from WordPress VIP. "And the fact that you can get this stuff out so quickly, and that anyone in the organisation can use it. I remember I was talking to David Hostetter, Al Jazeera's CTO, and he said 'There's probably no journalist who hasn't been exposed to WordPress...having something they already know helps us move faster.' Even with our corporate customers, where maybe they haven't used WordPress before, they can pick it up in a couple of hours. It's pretty easy. For the content creator, it's just so intuitive."

"A super majority of our customers are now using Gutenberg, and it's transformed the way that they create content and has given them a lot more flexibility in terms of the experience they can drive, in terms of the speed that they can create content, and it's taken away a lot of the cumbersome pieces that you had to deal with before. It's just been a huge win across the board."

Multilingual capabilities

As well as empowering editorial and marketing teams, Gutenberg can also help to save both time and resources, making it an appealing option for organisations looking to increase efficiencies or tighten spend. Big Bite's Sarah McCormick says: "We quickly recognised the potential of Gutenberg, and became the first agency in the world to use it to build an enterprise level project back in 2018. By creating publishing experiences with well-defined templates, custom workflows, and blocks that adhere to strict brand guidelines, we can enable anyone within an organisation to create new posts and pages within a matter of minutes, and dramatically reduce their dependence on engineering resources."

An abstract graphic on the right side of the page depicts a rocket launch. A central rocket is shown in profile, pointing upwards, with orange flames at its base. Surrounding the rocket are several dark blue rectangular panels, some tilted, containing white lines and orange circles, representing data or performance metrics. The overall style is modern and technical.

Performance **matters**

With an ever increasing number of organisations competing for audience attention online, site performance has become paramount, particularly since 2018 when page speed became a major ranking factor for mobile searches across Google. As a result, most large-scale brands and enterprise WordPress agencies are committed to producing sites that score well across Google's Core Web Vitals - user-focused metrics that signal how fast or slow a site experience feels.

As the platform powers such a significant percentage of the web, Google is also keen to collaborate with the WordPress ecosystem to look at innovative ways to further improve performance. Brendan McNamara, Strategic Partner Development Manager for Chrome & Web Global Partnerships at Google, explains:

“Google supports the WordPress Performance Team to monitor, enhance, and promote performance in WordPress core and the surrounding ecosystem. Optimising the quality of user experiences is important for the long-term success of any website, including those built with WordPress. Business owners, publishers, marketers, and developers can leverage Core Web Vitals to understand quantified site metrics and steps for improvement. Site owners don't need to be performance experts to understand quality experiences they deliver to users. Chrome recommends site developers reference Core Web Vitals to leverage unified guidance for delivering a great user experience on the web.”

OPTIMISING THE QUALITY OF USER EXPERIENCES IS IMPORTANT FOR THE LONG-TERM SUCCESS OF ANY WEBSITE, INCLUDING THOSE BUILT WITH WORDPRESS

Community support

As well as ensuring that all enterprise solutions continue to be performant, many leading WordPress agencies are also helping the wider ecosystem to strengthen site speed and usability through a range of initiatives. In addition to core code contributions and involvement with the WordPress Core Performance team, this includes the creation of free tools and plugins that highlight performance issues.

Brad at Alley says: “**There seems to be more focus on performance, which is great, and I know there are some WordPress teams that are being spun up to work solely just on that, so that's pretty awesome. I love to see a real focus on performance in core which I think is going to make everyone's life better, no matter whether you're building a small site or you're building an enterprise site, it's going to make developers lives easier and end users happier, so those two things definitely excite me.**”



BRENDAN MCNAMARA
GLOBAL PRODUCT PARTNERSHIPS
GOOGLE

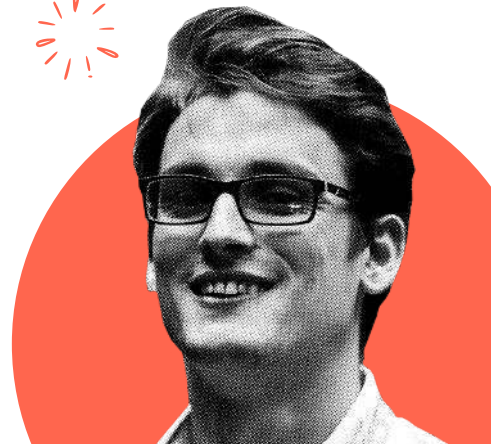
Feature **extensibility**



Thanks to its numerous APIs, WordPress is extremely extensible and offers an unrivalled level of flexibility in terms of modifying or creating new functionality. It can also be easily integrated with external systems, which means enterprise organisations can rely on best of breed solutions rather than best in suite features.

“WHERE WORDPRESS IS REALLY STRONG, IS THAT IT ENABLES YOU TO COMPOSE YOUR OWN DIGITAL EXPERIENCE PLATFORM YOURSELF OUT OF A BUNCH OF DIFFERENT TOOLS AND SERVICES THAT YOU’RE PICKING THAT BEST SOLVE YOUR NEEDS

TOM WILLMOT
CEO, HUMAN MADE



“I think the biggest difference between WordPress and other platforms - and I think that this is a positive differentiator - is that it isn't everything” says Gabe at 10up. “A lot of the time when we're talking to teams that are out to tender for a big new CMS, the value of WordPress is that can integrate it with any marketing automation tool, any CRM, any kind of tool that you want to integrate it with, versus other solutions where you're stuck with using their tools, and how they want to do personalisation, and how they want to do marketing automation, etc.”

Tom at Human Made agrees: “Where WordPress is really strong, is that it enables you to compose your own digital experience platform yourself out of a bunch of different tools and services that you're picking that best solve your needs. I think WordPress is really, really well positioned for that because of its long tail of integration, its flexibility, and its huge community which can provide way more integrations collectively than any of the proprietary platforms can.”

Although this flexibility is a huge selling point for the WordPress platform, the sheer scale of available options can sometimes make it difficult to demonstrate its value. Brad from Alley explains: “The optionality of WordPress hurts it to a degree. For example, if I was an Arc rep and I came in and did a demo, you would see your basic CMS tools, editorial workflow tools, integrated video tools, and analytics, and everything is really neatly packaged and ready to demo. With WordPress, you'll get there very quickly, but you have optionality - what analytics provider am I going to work with, what video provider am I going to work with? Once you set those things up, for example you install your Google Analytics plugin or your Brightcove plugin, all of a sudden you have a full featured dashboard, but the optionality can make it hard for procurement teams to compare apples to apples versus a closed source off-the-shelf platform that seems to have more built in, whereas you're actually kind of locked into stuff that may detrimental in the long run.”

Increased collaboration

There's also the argument that rather than building custom solutions on a per project basis, enterprise WordPress agencies could create stronger functionality while saving costs and resources if they collaborated on the development of large-scale features.

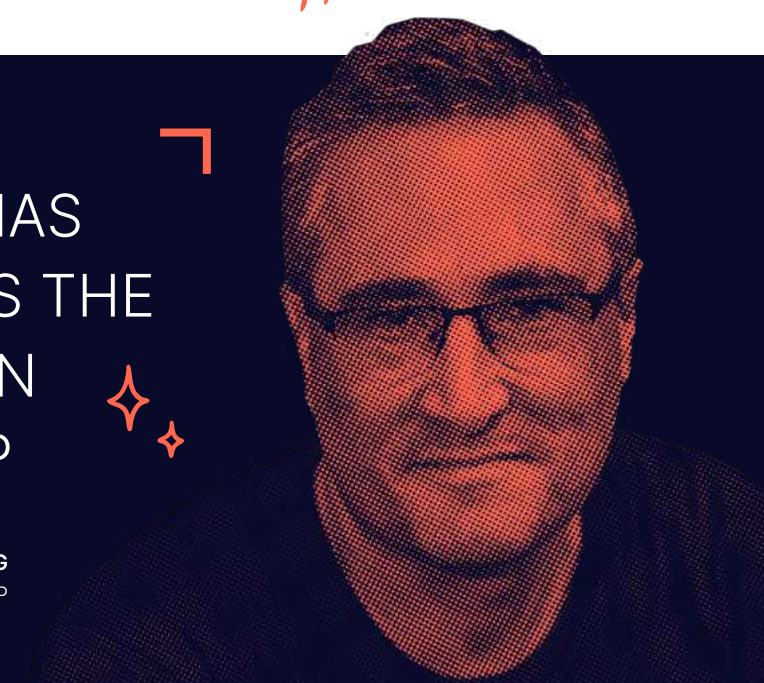
Myles Lagolago-Craig, CEO of XWP, says: **“Everyone at the enterprise buyer side has complex needs, and I think WordPress is the best solution for that because you can actually dictate your custom roadmap, however, there’s also value in an enterprise CMS system or DXP system having its own enterprise roadmap that clients don’t need to fund, and that also has its own ecosystem around it. Let’s say the next big thing in digital publishing comes along, and Adobe adds it to its enterprise roadmap, spends \$1 million developing it, and then sells it to enterprise clients. Comparatively, XWP will come along and develop something similar for a client that has a \$250,000 budget, and a second WordPress agency will build something for their client with a budget of \$150,000, and a third WordPress agency will do the same for \$100,000. At best, a WordPress client will end up with a \$250,000 feature, in contrast to Adobe’s \$1 million solution that has more bells and whistles.”**

Mollie at 10up agrees: **“The community aspect rooted within WordPress has been core to its success. I think that it’s important not to lose sight of that. What we do with it responsively as a collective is why adoption rates continue to grow.”**

This is certainly an area that’s likely to be explored further in the coming months and years as the platform continues to cement its position as a leading enterprise CMS, however at present, organisations can continue to benefit from bespoke functionality that meets their exact requirements as opposed to one-size-fits-all solutions.

EVERYONE AT THE ENTERPRISE BUYER SIDE HAS COMPLEX NEEDS, AND I THINK WORDPRESS IS THE BEST SOLUTION FOR THAT BECAUSE YOU CAN ACTUALLY DICTATE YOUR CUSTOM ROADMAP

MYLES LAGOLAGO-CRAIG
CEO, XWP



Headless

capabilities



One of the most recent requirements for enterprise organisations revolves around headless capabilities, where a platform is used for its back-end software while alternative technologies can be used to display content on the front-end of sites. Although there are mixed feelings on headless within the WordPress community and wider tech industry, it continues to gain traction with large organisations, and as many as 64% are currently using a headless approach for their web presence according to The State of Headless: A Global Research Report which was published by WordPress hosting platform, WP Engine, in 2021. The same study also found that 90% of surveyed enterprises are likely to consider headless in the near future.

Speaking on how WordPress fares within the headless space, Gabe at 10up says:

“WordPress is a really good headless CMS, especially with the introduction of Gutenberg as you get a lot out of it as a block based editor that you don’t get from other headless solutions. There are so many headless solutions out there where it feels like you’re going back in time and just putting content into very simple fields - WordPress solves that problem, and we’ve built frameworks to plug into that and solve some of the problems that you have to solve every time, whether that’s routing, or how you convert a React component back into a Gutenberg block. Those are solvable things, and there’s some real power in that. It has to be for the right project because it does create complexity for the long term, however it can be really powerful for organisations that are major multisite publishers, whether that’s a true publisher, or a B2B or enterprise company that has lots of different marketing sites. The power that you get from being able to reuse a component library and the core web application of a headless setup is really useful and super powerful for those organisations.”

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GABE KARP
MANAGING DIRECTOR
10UP

Brad from Alley adds: “Headless generally gets thought of as a headless WordPress site, but WordPress is headless in so many other ways. It’s a great content editor, and it has two great API frameworks built into core - its own core REST API as well as GraphQL - so we use WordPress to support many other things. It regularly pushes content to mobile apps, it pushes content to OTT apps for the broadcast clients that we’ve worked with. We regularly build newsletter templates in WordPress, because it’s so much easier to build a newsletter template in WordPress and push it to a campaign that’s just HTML rather than try to reverse engineer all your content rules in something like Mailchimp or Sailthru. WordPress already is capable of pushing to many different platforms, so I think that it will always continue to be the case that you may use WordPress as your content editor, but it may not be your content delivery system.”

Hybrid approach

For other enterprise WordPress leaders, headless isn’t the way forward. Tom at Human Made says: “ I hope we’ve passed peak headless, because it’s not really delivered on its promises. We still certainly get clients who want to go headless, and usually the reasons for that are not totally clear, and so you definitely still see it happening.

“I think what’s most successful - and part of what drove us to build out the REST API in the first place and be a kind of proponent of that becoming WordPress core - is that it’s very useful to be able to build that kind of hybrid, API driven experience as part of an overall site. That’s very useful - every site we do, does that. The dream of a content repository behind an API completely disconnected from the front end, and the supposed benefits of that, I’ve not seen that delivered in the real world, and it comes with a bunch of downsides. Perhaps I’d characterise it as a little bit similar to the whole microservices kind of thing from a few years ago - mostly those kind of things didn’t quite deliver, and there’s still a hype cycle that’s not quite played out yet so clients still think that what they need is headless, and that’s how they’re going to measure the vendors that they’re talking to, so you’ve got to have good answers to those things. We’re not going to our clients and advocating that they take a headless approach - it would be oversimplified and not really justified.”

Magne at Dekode confirms that his WordPress agency also opts for a middle ground:

“We usually don’t deliver full-on headless - we do more of a hybrid approach where components of the solution can be headless but still leveraging the speed of Gutenberg templating and reusability and so on. I think it’s a platform that is very good for innovation driven processes with mature clients that want to move fast. Usually I would say when you’re comparing offers in different platforms, it’s not enough to look at the price for the initial build, you need to know what the project will look like in a five-year perspective and if you’re a mature enterprise, you know that you’re going to iterate so going all in headless from the get go, that’s fine, you just need to know that it’s going to be expensive iterating over the five year period.

“This isn’t WordPress dependent, but I think too many technical decisions are made by developers based on intuition and what’s trendy and wanting to learn something new or adapt to new technology. I think another lens that is important, and probably equally important, is to look at how much business value technology choices are bringing. When looking to choose something new and shiny, you need to consider what it will require, whether there will be technical debt, and if enough people will know the framework, and so on. Often, going with something tried and tested is actually creating endurance in what you’re building, which in turn means we can focus on your innovation processes and business value creation.”



MAGNE ILSAAS
CEO / FOUNDING PARTNER
DEKODE

Looking
ahead 



Along with the wider digital industry, the WordPress landscape has changed so considerably in the last five years alone that it's difficult to predict what the future looks like for the platform and its global ecosystem. There are, however, some common themes when considering what will be most important in the coming years - headless, AI, usability, and optionality.

I ALSO THINK THERE'S AN EXTREME VERSION FOR THE FUTURE OF WORDPRESS WHERE WE END UP IN A SITUATION WHERE WE HAVE TWO DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE PLATFORM - AN ENTERPRISE AND A CONSUMER VERSION

GABE KARP
MANAGING DIRECTOR
10UP

"I think it's inevitable that we go further into headless and that is a thing that continues to happen" says Gabe of 10up. "I also think there's an extreme version for the future of WordPress where we end up in a situation where we have two different versions of the platform - an enterprise and a consumer version. I would really love to start seeing something like that."

I THINK IN THE HIGHER END OF WORDPRESS, AI IS PROBABLY GOING TO BE A REALLY IMPORTANT TOOL

MAGNE ILSAAS
CEO / FOUNDING PARTNER
DEKODE

Magne from Dekode adds: "I think AI is probably going to be a very important tool to speed up our work and to be able to spend more time on a more deliberate kind of thinking, and strategy, and testing, and marketing and whatnot. So I think in the higher end of WordPress, AI is probably going to be a really important tool, and in the lower end of WordPress, it's probably going to make a lot of the work that is done obsolete. I think understanding how AI can be used as a tool is going to really separate different companies and developers and designers and project managers, and so on, but it's too early to be definite about 'this is what AI is going to do for my project or job'"

In addition to these broader trends, it's certain there'll be a continued focus within WordPress to empower non-technical teams and individuals to create and publish content.

Brad from Alley comments: **"There definitely seems to be a push to make the WordPress CMS more user friendly, giving theme developers the option to create more features, and putting more power in the hands of people that are actually doing the writing and the editing so folks need to know less code. Of course, the burden is on agencies and theme developers to take advantage of those features and build stuff, but, when we develop a site I always want the power to be in the hands of the people that are using it everyday. We've developed a site, and we've developed a design system for you, and you should be able to use it within the bounds of what's possible to tell the story that you need to tell at that moment."**

Sarah from Big Bite says: **"Over the last decade, one of the biggest shifts we've seen in software is a much greater empathy for end users, which means enterprises are no longer satisfied with rigid systems that they need to work around. There's a growing demand for digital solutions that offer genuine flexibility, solving unique workflow challenges while also linking up with best in class tools to streamline your day-to-day operations. I think that's where WordPress really shines, and with a continued focus on improved usability, greater creative control, and increased convenience - through a combination of AI, machine-learning, and automation - it will cement its position as the top CMS for global brands."**

SARAH MCCORMICK
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
BIG BITE



Within the current WordPress roadmap, multilingual support is also scheduled to become a core component of its block editor, with the aim of making sites accessible to a much larger number of foreign language speakers, and enabling brands to more increasingly increase their geographical reach. Ultimately, the platform will continue to be driven by the needs, wants and ideas of the people and organisations it serves.

Michael of WordPress VIP says: **"When I think about WordPress, yes we're going to have more headless setups in WordPress in the future than we have today, yes we're going to have more AI as part of the WordPress core product and around the WordPress product, yes I think that we will continue to get more and more customers in different regulated industries that have been trapped into other solutions, and I think there are lot of things that I cannot possibly imagine, but that someone else is imagining. Most of them will end up being terrible, and they'll fail, and that's fine because out of the one thousand boats that are launched, ten will get to their destination, and those will be ten incredible boats, and ten incredible voyages. That's really what's part of the core DNA of WordPress."**

ONE OF THE BIGGEST SHIFTS WE'VE SEEN IN SOFTWARE IS A MUCH GREATER EMPATHY FOR END USERS, WHICH MEANS ENTERPRISES ARE NO LONGER SATISFIED WITH RIGID SYSTEMS THAT THEY NEED TO WORK AROUND



10up

10up.com

10up aims to make a better web with finely crafted websites, apps, and tools for content creators, leveraging open source technologies like WordPress and React. Its global team works with high profile brands including Microsoft, Google, Stanford University, Boudin Bakery and the Nobel Prize committee.



Alley

alley.com

A full-service consulting firm specialising in the design and development of digital platforms for news media, cultural institutions, and nonprofit publishers. Its globally dispersed team work has launched projects for brands including Penguin, New York Post, NBC Universal, and the Online News Association.



Big Bite

bigbite.net

One of the UK's leading WordPress agencies, Big Bite revolutionises how global newsrooms and enterprise brands create, collaborate and publish digital content. Focused on scale, efficiency and usability, its prestigious clientele includes News Corp, Gumtree, Octopus Group, the V&A, and Amnesty International.



Dekode

dekode.no

The biggest WordPress specialist agency in Scandinavia, Dekode bridges the gap between design and technology to create the best and most cost-efficient digital user experiences. Working with big brands and NGOs, its clients include Facebook, Save the Children, The Organ Donation Foundation, and Blue Cross Norway.



Human Made

humanmade.com

As a globally dispersed enterprise WordPress agency with a presence in 27 countries, Human Made helps businesses harness the power and flexibility of open source technology. Brands that rely on its bespoke development and strategy services include Google, TechCrunch, Skyscanner, Snopes, and USA Today.



Inpsyde

inpsyde.com

Europe's biggest pure WordPress agency and one of the leading WordPress agencies worldwide. Since its foundation in 2006, Inpsyde has led many sophisticated WordPress projects in the enterprise market to success, working with clients such as PayPal, Mercedes-Benz, Adidas, Smashing Magazine, SaP and Facebook.



WordPress VIP

wpvip.com

Founded in 2006, WordPress VIP is the agile content platform that empowers marketers to build content both faster and smarter so they can drive more growth. Its customers - from Al Jazeera and Capgemini to Salesforce and Slack - are some of the world's biggest enterprises.



XWP

xwp.co

Founded in 2006, WordPress VIP is the agile content platform that empowers marketers to build content both faster and smarter so they can drive more growth. Its customers - from Al Jazeera and Capgemini to Salesforce and Slack - are some of the world's biggest enterprises.

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