

WordPress Mobile Speed

PagePipe Report

Ratings & Reviews

Healing WordPress Distress

24 WordPress performance
errors and falsehoods.

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Below are 24 WordPress-related errors and falsehoods. They are perpetuated either accidentally or deliberately. Most of our shared insights are about WordPress speed misconceptions. Some notions and half-truths are actively “marketed” to create website-owner anxiety to sell services, themes, or plugins. We give some alternative recommendations to consider.

WordPress is easy.

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1. WordPress is easy and low maintenance.

Blogs regurgitate this a lot. Especially slow and ugly blogs. We don't agree. We ask, “Easy? Compared to what?” A root canal without Novocaine? Some people will screw up WordPress no matter how hard they try to get it right. Especially speed and feature overkill with expressive aesthetics.

Yet, WordPress is much easier than it was setting up and operating websites a few years ago.

WordPress is faster production than hand-coding. But there's still a "painful" learning curve for most people. And speed factors aren't thought about until the site loads in 10 to 20 seconds. Wonder why WordPress is junk? It's not. It's the driver at the wheel.

Recommendations: There are free video tutorials on how to use WordPress. We don't usually like them. But many people do. We're more into experimental-learning methods. But there's no excuse for being untrained or producing a bad, slow site.

Speed and SEO

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2. Speed affects Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

Speed affects user experience and first impression. It makes less than one percent difference in Google page ranking (SEO). If you're doing speed adjustments to get better SEO, you're barking up the wrong tree. Focus instead on relevant content.

<http://pagepipe.com/page-speed-doesnt-affect-seo-rankings-much/>

<http://pagepipe.com/avoiding-futile-web-myths-about-site-speed/>

Recommendation: Worry about relevant content for your audience more than speed.

Facebook

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3. Facebook is good.

Facebook social links are bad for two reasons.

1. Facebook takes traffic away from your site into La-La-Land. Those visitors rarely return. Facebook is a time waster. Facebook manipulates you to work on contrived posts. You start writing clever things for “likes.” This skews or biases your work.

2. Facebook widgets slow down pages in the 1-second delay range. But it can be worse, many social plugins have even slower, built-in "management and analytics." Most technocrats predict the eventual demise of Facebook. We like that thought.

Some websites depend on Facebook completely to get traffic. But that's not the norm.

Facebook takes a lot of personal time to keep a flow of site traffic. Major babysitting. The most successful have full-time employees generating content and contests daily. For normal sites, they'll never see "the viral dream" happen from Facebook.

When an organization puts a link on Facebook to their latest blog post, they may see traffic. But traffic alone doesn't change the world. That's a number. How about contributions to a donation fund or sales? Did that increase? No? Again it depends upon what you're writing about and asking for. Everyone thinks they need a Facebook page. They don't. They want one because everyone else has one.

Some believe social-sharing buttons help increase site awareness. This is

contingent on visitors "sharing" with their Facebook followers. Sounds like a good thing but rarely is. There's no proof.

We've seen a "sharing strategy" work for a competitor of a client. But the investment of resources to make that work is big. If the client has a celebrity status with their following. Yes. It happens. It's a hero-worship situation.

Social-links cause global site drag. They double or triple load times for all pages. It doesn't have to be that way. There are alternatives. Faster static image links instead of dynamic counters and slow third-party widgets are better.

One other thing that makes us laugh: Facebook "Like" Counters. When we visit a site that has pompous claims and then see the "like-counter" has 17 likes, we always say, "Wow! Real credibility."

Our recommendation: Don't add social links because the herd is doing it. Think about the speed impact. Make sure it's worth it.

Google Analytics

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4. Analytics are good.

Big Data (tons of metrics) are a waste of time. Great for inspector types. Many site owners don't look at them – ever. Nor do they know how to access or interpret them. Yet they habitually install Google Analytics. Those Google Analytic scripts and beacons slow down site pages globally. Especially when the Google Cloud fails to connect without delay. If all you need is a visitor counter, a simple plugin won't slow down your site.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-counter/>

Google Analytics does something we've always found peculiar. The Google

“stats” department recommends the tracking code go in the WordPress header. This is so no loss of “data counts” occur should someone abandon your page before it completely loads. Yet, Google “performance” department says put the tracking code last – at the end. This eliminates “javascript render blocking” which slows down the page. So which way is best. We say, “Go for the footer and faster load times.”

Google Analytics scripts also have an unusually short cache expiry time of 2 hours. This isn't best practice. This generates bad speed score on tests. A far-futures expiration is best set for 365 days. Then the cache is already primed. Google isn't using best practices that they recommend on PageSpeed Insights testing. Weird!

Google Analytics shows percentages of your audience that are on mobile devices. This number is great knowledge for producing anxiety about mobile speed. You can assume at least half of your traffic is mobile.

Generally, analytics is too complicated. It's overkill. It may be fun and "scientific" to look at some stats about how many people are coming to your site – but so what? Quantity isn't always quality. Only one stat matters: "Is anyone doing what you want them to do once they get to your site"?

Our recommendation: Don't assume Google Analytics is the best choice for your site. There are alternatives. What do you need? Nothing? Gather numbers with a free, lightweight counter plugin or using free Cpanel features. To access AWStats for your site: Log into cPanel. In the Logs section, click the AWStats icon. Click the view icon next to the domain name for which you wish to view stats.

If you feel you must use Google Analytics, install the **Complete Analytics Optimization Suite (CAOS)** plugin. It allows you to optimize Google Analytics for speed. <https://wordpress.org/plugins/host-analyticsjs-local/>

Post Comments

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5. Comments are good feedback.

Comments are trite. They burn up time. Babysitting or answering requests for things you can't support is wasteful. A post that says, "Good job, Steve" is boring and silly. Our goal is getting real email from serious people.

Some people think it's great to write a tutorial and get comments from people who agree (or disagree). The comments bring a different perspective and new ideas to a topic.

We suspect it depends upon the situation. For example, Client Doctor X got a lot of comments – and a ton of porn Spam. Almost all the more “legitimate” comments asked for medical advice. The site owner can't give public advice out because of health practice laws. One-size solution doesn't fit all sick people. Comments were wasting space and time.

When we recommended he turn off comments globally, he was happy. He didn't know that was an option. He already knew they were unproductive and never brought him a single patient.

<http://pagepipe.com/does-akismet-plugin-help-or-hinder-wordpress-page-speed/>

Our recommendation: Think. “How bad do you want comments?” It's OK if you do, but many people don't realize they have a choice. Turn off comments globally with Disable Comments plugin. We haven't built a speed site yet where the owner wanted comments enabled. You tend to hear comments from the extremes, those that either love you more than reasonable, or those who are just spreading toxicity.

CDNs and speed

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6. You should always use a content delivery network (CDN).

Cheapskate WordPress site owners use free CloudFlare CDN services. They think they are making things better and faster. It causes all sort of delays and server errors. A well-optimized website doesn't need CDN.

<http://pagepipe.com/cloudflare-doesnt-guarantee-consistent-load-times/>

Our recommendation: Don't use free CloudFlare CDN. Most small sites can't justify the \$10 to \$20 monthly extra expense of paid CDNs. Avoid the temptation by learning real speed solutions.

Caching plugins

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7. Caching will speed up your site by 10 times.

Everyone rants and raves about how good caching is. But we never see any speed improvements on well-optimized sites. We suspect the gain they claim is from Gzip activation by the caching plugin. That's important but has nothing to do with caching.

Things are fast on a site with plugins for:

- Gzip
- minification
- far-future expiration
- lazy loading
- Optimize Database
- Query Strings Remover
- Remove Google Fonts References

With these plugins activated, caching makes no difference in any speed time. No matter what caching plugin we test.

Comment: We add WP Super Simple Speed plugin because it improves our Pingdom score – but not the speed. It helps us feel better about our "vigilance." Therapeutic benefits.

WP Smush plugin

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8. WP Smush plugin is all you need for image optimization.

The free and popular WP Smush plugin only compresses JPEGs by about 10 percent. That's insignificant. Yet, it's the most installed image optimizer (600,000+ active installs). It's only goal is upselling you to the pro version. It doesn't give you any control over the compression. Lossy-compression by-hand is what makes a JPEG file-size difference. Images then are a quarter of the weight.

Never use PNG format for photographs. They will slow down your website.

<http://pagepipe.com/smush-plugin-doesnt-really-help-with-speed/>

<http://pagepipe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/optimize-v8.pdf>

Our Recommendation: Learn how to optimize in an image processing program. Some tools are available for free online. And lots of video tutorials. It's easier than it sounds. Our favorite plugin for controlling automated compression is the free Imsanity plugin. Yeah. Imsanity. That's not a typo.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/imsanity/>

Paid vs. Free plugins & themes

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9. Paid plugins and themes are always better than free. Especially if they have lots of features.

Paid and free plugins and themes have the same weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The fluffy features produce the slowest load times. Things that happen for both paid and free stuff are:

- bad coding
- disappearing authors
- security vulnerabilities
- update incompatibilities
- buyouts
- business failures
- and more.

We admit some paid components are better than free. Two plugins we've experimented with are: WP Rocket and UpDraftPlus – migrator. We've seen them do what they claim – but not always without negative consequences. Every plugin has a downside of some sort.

Are paid plugin updated faster? Perhaps. But not if the plugin author has retired. Paid and free plugins are often orphaned or abandoned.

Paid themes offer a superior closed community. This has an advantage for better quality control in most cases. But it's not true in all case. Nor is it true forever. These vendors change the rules of their game as fast as hosting companies. We don't trust them any more than freebie themes and plugins. Volatile marketplace.

And we don't endorse all freebies. That's why we test and write about them in PagePipe reviews. Using free plugins is like Russian Roulette with 5 cartridges in six chambers. Paid is one bullet in a 6-cylinder revolver. Safer? Give it a spin. Pull the trigger.

In 2015, Yoast SEO plugin security vulnerability had potential to bring down the Internet. WordPress (Automattic) pushed out updates without user permission. Steamroller. This saved WordPress most – not Yoast.

Same thing recently happen with a security flaw in WordPress core 4.7.1 and 4.7.2. But this time Google intervened with email warning to site owners. They were afraid WordPress would collapse the Internet. Google did recommend updating without asking anyone. They were protecting their interests – not WordPress.

WordPress does odd things. Like the 2015 Trojan-Horse security-fix disguised as an Emoji mandatory update. What a joke.

Is WordPress run by cowboys? Is it a house of cards? The whole ecosystem keeps increasing in complexity and fragility. It's open source and massive. Almost 50k plugins. How many of those plugins are instant death for websites? Which can we trust?

The answer: We still build with WordPress and wouldn't build with anything else. There's no such thing as a risk-free website. It requires testing. Cautious testing. Risk reduction is why we test all the time. Sometimes we're researching damage

from "WP Garbage." There are occasions where every free plugin in a classification breaks a theme. Is that the plugin's fault? Or the theme? Or WordPress? We often can't tell.

Our Recommendation: Read PagePipe's plugin and theme reviews. Always test themes and plugins. Free or Paid. Never buy a theme based on a demo-page evaluation alone. They're usually "tricked out."

Too many plugins.

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10. Too many plugins slow down WordPress.

Nothing is further from the truth. It's plugin quality not quantity that affect speed. When we tweak a website for speed, we almost always add about 25 plugins. Some are for improved security. Some add features. And some make the site run faster.

It's assumed built-in theme features are faster than using standalone plugins. We've never found this the case. A bloated theme is always slower. The better strategy is taking a stripped-down theme and add only those plugins needed. That can produce a fast website.

Some vendors promote paid themes as faster performance. We tested a demo page for an advertised \$59 "performance" theme

<http://wydethemes.com/overlap/> . It loaded in under 2 seconds. It was a 4.4M page with 80 HTTP requests. It was impressive. And it had features out the wazoo. In fact, it had too much clutter. And no way for a non-programmer to extract those features or leave them empty. You had to fill the "slots" with images, etc. No way to strip it down easily.

They were advertising "performance" as the number one benefit. But they weren't playing fair. The theme was on "special" hosting for images and caching. "Overlap theme" demo is image intensive and loading the images from Flickr CDN. They were also hosting on paid CloudFlare CDN. We don't know if other "paid" speed tricks were being used.

In other words, the theme vendor paid extra money to get that demo speed. So the performance resided in more than the theme. How much? We didn't quantify. Won't we feel ripped off when our 4M, image-intensive page doesn't load as fast as the demo?

PagePipe has 44 active plugins and loads in around a second or less (cheap-server TTFB dependent). People can do the same with no programming skills if they read our blog. It's free knowledge.

<http://pagepipe.com/myth-too-many-wordpress-plugins-slows-down-page-speed/>

Our Recommendation: Use a free, stripped-down theme with plugins to add features.

Google Webfonts

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11. Webfonts don't slow down your site much because they're in the browser cache already.

Sometimes true. But usually WordPress themes force a webfont call to a cloud host. That's where the delay occurs. The host CDN isn't ready. We've seen 1-second delays for even the simplest and undecorative font requests to Google. And TypeKit always adds many seconds.

We can sometimes get a sub-second load time with Google fonts intact. But rarely. We remove Google Fonts for extreme optimization. It always tips the speed balance in our favor. System default fonts or websafe fonts are the fastest.

The biggest speed problem is inconsistent webfont CDN-server access times. Some icon fonts like theme-resident Genericons throw 404-errors 30 percent of the time. That causes unknown delays. Why? Who can guess? Not us. We test many themes and see it happen. Do all themes use Genericons. Nope. Less than a third. Be choosy.

And the funny thing is very few viewers notice websafe fonts any more. Visitors can't remember the shape of Georgia, Arial, and Verdana either. Transparency results. There's no moaning, "Not that font again."

It's a huge waste when people obsess over getting the "fonts" they think are so important on their web sites. No ordinary user can tell Arial from Helvetica from Lato from Roboto from Open Sans.

<http://pagepipe.com/should-i-disable-font-awesome-and-google-fonts-for-improved-speed/>

Our Recommendation: Deactivate Google Webfonts with a plugin. For high traffic on tablets and iPhones, specify system defaults (sans serif and serif). Add fallbacks to the old standard websafe fonts.

Global site drag.

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12. Forms only load where the shortcode resides. And the same goes for Google Maps, and social media, and sliders.

Site owners don't realize most plugins load globally (aka site drag). The fix is a plugin called "Plugin Logic." It allows individual plugin selection or deselection on URL pages or posts. Imagine adding a Google Map plugin and not noticing that it adds 500k of page weight to every single page. (Not all Google Map plugins do that – just most).

<http://pagepipe.com/selective-plugin-deactivation/>

Ninety percent of site designers have no idea about global plugin site drag. Even professional front-end designers are often clueless about plugin site drag. We have an article on this and other contact form alternatives:

<http://pagepipe.com/contact-form-7-plugin-causes-global-site-drag/>

and this one:

<http://pagepipe.com/plugins-load-on-every-wordpress-page-and-post-adding-to-code-bloat-and-slower-load-times-everywhere/>

For installed and activated contact forms, 90 percent will slow down every page of your site. Even without a shortcode installed – anywhere. Ten percent will only slow down the page with the shortcode.

As explained in the article, worst-case – you'll add about 49k to every page. It seems to translate into 200 milliseconds for Contact Form 7. That's insignificant unless you also have sliders and other junk adding site drag, too. For mobile, every millisecond counts. That 200 milliseconds is 20 percent of our ideal performance budget wasted.

We've found many plugins (like related posts) have the same behavior. Again, you can only know for sure by testing.

<http://pagepipe.com/contact-form-7-plugin-causes-global-site-drag/>

<http://pagepipe.com/plugins-load-on-every-wordpress-page-and-post-adding-to-code-bloat-and-slower-load-times-everywhere/>

<http://pagepipe.com/how-do-i-get-users-to-read-more-of-my-content/>

Our Recommendation: Do you need a contact form? Can you use a lighter, faster form? Could you use an email link instead? Install a plugin to make the contact form plugin only active on your contact page.

Google PageSpeed Insights

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13. Google uses PageSpeed Insights to rank your pages.

Sorry. Google should use their own test scores to rank pages. But they don't. People kill themselves trying to improve their site scores. They think it will improve SEO. All in vain.

Only one speed parameter makes any SEO difference: Time To First Byte (TTFB). That's a function of your hosting provider. An excellent TTFB is under 100 milliseconds. Can you find a shared hosting provider that gives that kind of connection time? Yes. <http://www.ipage.com/> (\$11 per month, no Cpanel). We've been testing their hosted sites and even with 20 or more domains shared on a server they can get 50 to 100ms TTFB.

PagePipe is hosted on a GoDaddy shared-server (\$7.50 per month). This proves we can get speed even under poor conditions. Their lousy 600-millisecond TTFB annoys us when it irrationally goes to 1 second or more. We share our server with 24 other domains that we don't own. We've seen bad TTFB on expensive hosting, too. We don't make hosting recommendations. There's nothing we've experienced that's consistent and reliable.

Which brings up another common foolish recommendation. "Never use any hosting company owned by Endurance International Group." This is baloney. They own most everyone. Including iPage.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endurance_International_Group

BlueHost was once a great hosting service. EIG bought by them out. Now they are totally worthless for speed. BlueHost is the worst host for cramming 1,000s

of domains on a shared-magnetic server.

But in some cases, things got better for other companies after the buy outs. There's no standard EIG management or policy consistency.

What can you do about bad TTFB numbers? Move to a different hosting service. And then when that service turns goes bad – wash and repeat. It's all cyclical.

TTFB is usually beyond our control or pocketbook. So the idea is building a fast-loading site to combat or offset the poor TTFB overhead. You have a 2-second performance budget. Then, a 500-millisecond TTFB just ate 25 percent. That leaves you with 1.5 seconds to load the theme, plugins, and images. We can get under 1-second page loads under these conditions – but not if you have third-party ads or Facebook "likes" live-counters. It takes thought, workarounds, and experimentation. Always creativity is the speed answer.

<http://pagepipe.com/render-blocking-js-is-the-most-annoying-and-unresolvable-error-message/>

<http://pagepipe.com/sitegrounds-feeble-explanation-of-bad-ttfb-for-hosted-wordpress-sites/>

Our Recommendation: Build for speed. Find out what your hosts TTFB numbers are. Move hosts if necessary. Use creativity.

Speed test scores.

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14. Speed scores are important and good.

Speed scores on Pingdom, WebPagetest.org, and all others are pretty meaningless. For some reason, they are always shown first or in a dominant location. It's load time in milliseconds that count most. Second-most important is

page weight. Page bloat causes costly data overages through mobile carriers (AT&T, Verizon, T-mobile, etc).

Speed scores makes things more interesting which helps people pay attention. This is the psychology of scoring. But things they list as "failures" are often of little consequence for speed improvement. Especially on small sites. These red-flagged failures agitate people to the point they feel they "must fix it." People are searching for an answer – even if there isn't a good one.

Compelled people waste their life chasing unreachable ideals set by the demigod Google.

Our Recommendation: Ignore speed test scores. Focus on load time in milliseconds.

Minification

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15. Minification is an important optimization tactic.

Minification plugins are nice when they work. But more often than not, they break your website in some odd way. Minification reduces the number of requests. Parallel delivery of HTTP requests makes a difference in speed more than minification. We do minification – if it doesn't affect the theme functions. Any sign of trouble and we may try a couple more favorite minify plugins and then quit. Not worth the grief.

If there wasn't some success that seemed "good," we wouldn't minify. It's a psychological benefit and that's about all. It has therapeutic value. You can drop minification with little speed impact. It used to be more important. Browsers have changed and allow more parallel loading than they used to.

We've done tests. After enabling Gzip, minification only reduces file sizes by an extra one percent. Small speed reward.

<http://pagepipe.com/hummingbird-wordpress-speed-plugin/>

Our Recommendation: Test minification plugins. But if they break your site. Forget about it.

The jQuery logo is displayed in white text on a red rectangular background. The text "jQuery" is in a bold, sans-serif font, with the "j" being lowercase and the "Q" being uppercase.

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16. Loading alternative jQuery is dangerous.

When we first started using a plugin to load jQuery from a CDN, it made only 1 HTTP request. Now, it makes two. One request to Google Cloud and the other to CloudFlare CDN. This is OK since they load in parallel. They now have the jQuery load time down to around 9 milliseconds. Compared to 100ms using WordPress-resident jQuery. And the probability is high, Google's version is cached already. Should the cloud-based jQuery fail, the plugin loads the slower, on-board jQuery. Both of the following plugins load Google's jQuery:

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-jquery-plus/>

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-super-simple-speed/>

<http://pagepipe.com/is-removing-the-default-version-of-jquery-in-wordpress-irresponsible/>

Our Recommendation: JQuery substitution speed gain is small. At the most, 100 milliseconds. We'll take that! Small millisecond gains add up to seconds. So we always replace jQuery because it's painless. A plugin with no settings.

17. Gzip doesn't help speed much.

Gzip is the second most important site optimization tactic after image optimization. It's appalling to learn in 2008 "Netflix saw a 43% decrease in their bandwidth bill after turning on Gzip." They were bragging about it. How could it take them that long to figure that out!? Incredible oversight. Gzip is fundamental. It's been around for a long time.

We've written about Gzip a few times in articles. There are good and bad ways of trying to activate it. Some Gzip plugins are real bad and break your site. Others slow down your site using PHP to activate Gzip on individual pages and posts. Very slow stuff.

<http://pagepipe.com/update-on-gzip-compression/>

Our Recommendation: Always enable Gzip file compression on the server. Some hosts (like GoDaddy) enable Gzip by default. There are free plugins that do this in our articles above. We also tell you how to know if Gzip is working or not.

18. You can trust hosting claims of speed performance.

Never trust a host's speed claim or advertising. Or even "independent reviews" – they are almost always an affiliate link. They lie. Use <http://www.bytecheck.com/> for fastest TTFB testing on actual sites hosted by the company. That is the only thing you can trust.

For example, SiteGround claims 100ms TTFB. But the truth is they get about 800ms TTFB. Worse than GoDaddy! And frequent erratic behavior with 20-second load times.

Every hosting-review site is an affiliate trap filled with lies. But we've never seen a site or blog warning people to "watch out" for tainted recommendations.

<http://pagepipe.com/sitegrounds-feeble-explanation-of-bad-ttfb-for-hosted-wordpress-sites/>

Our Recommendation: Test speed performance claims of any host. Ask for a "directory page" of hosted client sites. Test those URLs.

WordPress image optimization.

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19. WordPress is "smart" and optimizes images for you.

WordPress is pretty "intelligent" when it comes to image optimization. In 2016, they changed optimization specs to match WebPagetest.org's recommended quality setting. That helps get most images to pass the strict test.

But WordPress ignores a couple of loopholes.

WordPress doesn't optimize "original images." Only cropped images. And sometimes those will get heavier in weight. For example, if we upload a

properly-sized 33k PNG featured image, it becomes a 165k WordPress-processed PNG. What? Bigger? If we use the same image dimensions – but in a GIF format – and place it as a featured image, the weight becomes 54k. Almost 110k lighter translation than the PNG. Why the difference between PNG and GIF? Why any upsizing change at all when built to the correct dimensions? WordPress voodoo!

Our main complaint is WordPress claiming "image optimization" features are "taken care of." But then not specify where and when this occurs. They're not telling the cases where it doesn't optimize – or makes things worse by upsizing. Site owner then suffer from a sense of false security. Owners think everything is "best practice." It's not.

WordPress optimizes thumbnail, medium, large, etc. images when you upload a file.

Build JPEGs to exact dimensions and WordPress does not change those images. Except when it does muck about with PNGs and GIFs as already explained. WordPress has not done a good job of clearing up this often-confusing topic.

Stop cluttering your server with duplicate small images by setting the defaults to 0 x 0 pixel sizes. That creates no small images. We don't do that. Server space is cheap. But it's good to know for trickery and workarounds in extreme cases.

Dashboard > Setting > Media > thumbnail size, Medium size, large size.

Feature images resized in "HTML code" stretch or shrink. This is bad practice for speed. It's theme dependent. It slows down the browser image-calculation time. A good theme resizes the dimensions smaller (not larger) by fixed-size cropping. No stretching.

Using HTML math (stretching) delays page rendering. Sometimes we build and use the "thumb size" as the post's feature image. Then place a full-size, optimized-by-hand image in the body text. This can keep a bloated grid- or masonry-style layout page built from feature images lightweight. This can reduce weight from 2M to 200k. That's important for speed.

<http://pagepipe.com/quality-82-image-compression-change-for-wordpress/>

Our Recommendation: Verify the final image sizes on your posts after

publication. Check if they are heavier than before. Optimize by hand when possible with an image processing program.

Expressive aesthetics.

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20. Animation, parallax, popups, sliders and expressive aesthetics that get attention are good.

These are all bad. They distract and frustrate the user. They are heavy and bog down the site. They're fads. OptiMonster (popup) plugin has a lot of hype on the Internet. They brag magnificence for getting more subscriptions. We don't believe it. Popups annoy users. Big surprise?! Everyone making great claims about this plugin is an affiliate. Tainted testimonials.

<http://pagepipe.com/what-slider-is-the-fastest-loading/>

Our Recommendation: Anything that moves, try to get rid of it. Animation slows down pages and distracts viewers away from valuable content.

Designers are accountable.

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21. Web designers make good choices and are accountable.

Ha. Ha. Their research is usually limited to finding what theme or plugin is most popular. Of course, we've found those are the slowest, heaviest components. And complicated, too. And the shortcut of using "drag-and-drop builder plugins" guarantees a slow loading site.

Our Recommendation: Don't be apathetic. Learn more and push back on features and bloat.

Site redesign.

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22. A site redesign will make your SEO and email capture better.

Rarely. Even never. It's the site content! It's solving peoples problems or needs that brings them to a site. If you have good content, even a dog-eared site will get read. Shabbiness may reduce it's credibility. And other psychological factors, too, but some content is evergreen. In that case, a redesign may be a waste because no improvement in traffic or sales will result. Been there.

Designers sometimes sell false hope. The real solution is better content and we mean good written content. Not new pictures.

A redesign can help if the old site had poor organization. Or content was hard to notice or hard to find – or hard to read once a visitor finds it. That's how a redesign can help.

Our Recommendation: Redesign to fix responsivity, readability, and findability issues. Real SEO improvement has nothing to do with colors and fonts and logos.

User Experience

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23. UX is scientific.

User Experience (UX) is a pseudoscience. And always overpriced. Front-end design quality is subconscious – and is immeasurable. You can only do satisfaction surveys and hope people don't lie. Good luck.

Our Recommendation: UX is web hospitality. It's common sense. User experience is how people **feel** when they **use** your website. Use wisdom. Keep things simple. Be empathetic.

The "WordPress Way"

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24. The "WordPress Way" is the right and correct way.

For sure! [maniacal laughter] Like adding emojis. The delayed load-time anchor. Most people don't realize they can remove emojis. Yet the less-known Disable Emojis plugin has 40,000 downloads. What does that tell you about that great WordPress-way feature?

This is the solution:

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/disable-emojis/>

No settings just activate it. Emojis are gone.

<http://pagepipe.com/how-to-eliminate-deadweight-emojis-in-wordpress/>

Our Recommendation: Get rid of emojis.

Other Speed Recommendations

When we're asked to evaluate a site, the question is, "How can I speed up WordPress?"

WordPress is never the problem. There is a repeating pattern to speed difficulties. The site owner is usually struggling with a minor-benefit plugin to salvage the project. The site may be loading in 10 to 20 seconds. Way too long. The desperate owner thinks adding something like a minification plugin will save the day. Minification is a band-aid that makes small speed differences.

Other unhelpful band-aids on the list are the first things desperate people grab to remedy speed. They include: minification plugins, caching plugins, "smush" plugin, "Hummingbird" and CDN services. None of these help much.

The site owner missed the main point. Their biggest speed problem is excess. Too much expressive aesthetic. Too many unoptimized images.

What is expressive aesthetic? Sliders, big background images, PNG photographs, parallax scrolling, animation, popups, etc. It's simply adding too much stuff. Discipline is needed. Saying "no" to bloat. Keep it simple.

In error, owners consider all site components essential. They aren't. There is a hierarchy of value or contribution to the website goals. Owners can't see the supposed "essential" is the blindspot and trap. They aren't doing **value analysis** of every component – starting with the worst and heaviest offenders and working their way down the list.

Value analysis is an industrial manufacturing concept used to streamline production process. But it applies equally to speeding up WordPress websites. Value analysis includes: combination, simplification, elimination, standardization, and substitution.

ADVERTISING BLOAT

The worst cause of site drag is third-party widgets. And the worst of those is ads. When you place advertising from third-parties on your website, you destroy

the chances of controlling speed. Usually the best thing to do is eliminate ads if possible or substitute higher-quality ad sources that care more about speed. This requires testing and studying. There is no simple answer to ad bloat. We tell you now, solving this speed problem is the most difficult.

WIDGETS AND SCRIPTS

The second biggest cause of site drag is Facebook - especially, Facebook real-time-Like-counter widgets. Anything calling assets from Facebook has potential for connection-time delays. Use other methods to connect to Facebook if you feel Facebook is an absolute essential. Use text links or static image links. Do you really need Facebook and other social links?

All third-party requests are slow. These can include analytic services, podcast services, user tracking services, maps, and email services. We also include webfonts.

HEAVY PLUGINS

There are times when the site-drag culprit is a big, fat plugin hogging resources. The decision to use the plugin is usually based on "popularity." Popularity is erroneously determined by the number of active installs.

What is more indicative of a good plugin is **retention**. You can calculate retention by taking the number of active installs and dividing by the total number of downloads. Downloads are found on the plugin page "stats" link. High retention is around 30 percent. Low is anything below 10 percent.

When you find a plugin with 50 percent retention, it's a flag from users that there is real value. It's a rule of thumb. The plugin still could be slow. Retention just helps in the selection process.

Remember, there are nearly 50,000 plugins in the free plugin directory. There's usually a better-and-faster plugin invented this very moment. Every plugin must be tested before-and-after activation on your site. Check how it affects various speed tests like PageSpeedtest.org and Pingdom.com.

Heavy plugins can include maps, contact forms, related post widgets, "Hello Bar," navigation enhancement, sliders, parallax, P3 Plugin Performance Profiler (use it and then delete it), database cleaners (use then disable), broken link checkers (use and then disable), any statistic plugin, Gzip plugins that use PHP methods. The list goes on. The key is always test speed before and after activation.

THEME SELECTION

At the beginning of web construction, speed is usually never considered or forgotten. Selecting a fast-loading theme is critical. It should happen first. We recommend choosing an unadorned and almost featureless theme – with only the most fundamental barebones functions. Install it in some hosting space to really evaluate and test. Theme demo pages are always deceiving. They aren't reality. We've found the more popular a theme, the heavier it is. That's because people are attracted to colorful, expressive features. Animation and heavy background images look great but they kill speed.

We've written about how to select a fast themes:

<http://pagepipe.com/category/wordpress-speed-theme-reviews/>

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