WordPress for Campaigns

Kirk Jackson

WordPress is the world's most popular **Content Management System** (CMS).

Originally designed for blogs, but can be used for any simple website.

- **WordPress.org** provides WordPress software for free. You'll find documentation (a.k.a. codex), themes and plugins there.

- **WordPress.com** is a platform for hosting WordPress blogs (see below).

Hosting

Ways of hosting a WordPress site:

- **WordPress.com:** Not recommended because it has limitations, it may place ads on your website, and it charges for extras.

- **Commerical hosting companies:** Many companies provide WordPress hosting for a monthly fee, e.g. DreamHost, 123-reg, GoDaddy.

- **Activist organisations:** Some activist tech collectives provide free WordPress blogs for activists, e.g. network23.org and noblogs.org. These organisations try to keep your data private and secure, so they vet plugins and themes before allowing them to be installed.

- **Your own web server:** Only for tech experts!

Domain name

You'll probably want your own domain name, e.g. mycampaign.org.uk. You can register a domain name through a registrar company and then attach it to your website. You may be able to register a domain name through your host, which will be easier to set up.

Themes

The active theme determines how your site is presented – the layout and formatting. Free themes, contributed by the WordPress community, are available via WordPress.org. When choosing a theme, consider:

- **Layout:** These days, a theme needs to be **responsive**, *i.e.* it needs to adapt to any screen size so that it fits on mobile, tablet and desktop. On wider screens, content may be laid out in several columns.

- **Customisability:** Does the theme let you change the header image, colours, layout, *etc*?

Content Management

To log in, go to /wp-admin. From the Dashboard, the main menu lets you manage various types of content:

- **Posts and pages:** Posts are like blog entries; they're listed in date order, most recent first. Pages are static; they make up the structure of your website. One of your pages will be the one on which all your posts appear. Posts can be presented as campaign updates.

- **Media:** Images for use in your posts and pages

- **Comments:** Visitors can leave comments on your pages and posts. WordPress sites attract spam comments, so you need to approve comments before they appear on the site (or turn off comments altogether).

- **Widgets:** Small pieces of content that can be placed in "widget areas", *e.g.* sidebars of your website. Some plugins make new widgets available.

- **Users:** Each person who needs to log in to the website should have their own account with the appropriate security role.

- **Settings:** When you're first setting up your website, it's worth going through all of the WordPress site settings.

Plugins

Plugins add features to your website that don't come with WordPress as standard. There are many plugins created by the WordPress community, available via WordPress.org.

Useful plugins include:

- Akismet* for automatically filtering out spam comments

- Jetpack* adds many features including site traffic stats and social media sharing buttons.

- Plugins to create contact pages, e.g. Contact Form 7

- Plugins to show forthcoming events, the best of which is Events Manager

- Plugins to display slideshows

- Plugins to make your website more secure, e.g.:

  - Force Strong Passwords, which tries to prevent users from setting passwords that would be easy to guess

  - Plugins that add a CAPTCHA test to the login screen

* Plugins that require you to sign up for a free online service that may harvest data.

Security

To avoid your website being hacked, always set a strong password: at least 12 characters containing at least one upper case letter, lower case letter, digit and punctuation symbol. Don't make your password a single, correctly spelled word as that's too easy to guess, even with some letters replaced by numbers.

Be aware that themes and plugins, which are developed by third parties, may be untrustworthy.

Advanced WordPress

WordPress is designed to be customised and extended. You can build your own custom themes and plugins using the WordPress APIs, but this requires knowledge of coding in PHP as well as HTML and CSS.

- **Custom themes**, including child themes
- **Custom plugins**