

# Build a Website? Yes, You Can: WordPress Makes Building a Dynamic Website Accessible to Anyone

**Presenter: Michael Sheen**

*This is a transcript of a presentation given on September 24–26, 2020, at the annual conference of the Latter-day Saint Publishing and Media Association (LDSPMA). You may not reproduce or publish this material without prior written consent from LDSPMA.*

**Michael Sheen:** Well, hello. My name is Michael Sheen, and I am an artist and a designer.

You know, I've been asked to teach you guys today about WordPress, but maybe just a little bit of background first. My first real website I built in about, I think it was about 1999, and I say real website because it was my first commercial website. It was for the Elko Chamber of Commerce up in Nevada and, you know, it looked pretty good for the time.

But back then, it was a totally different world. Every screen was the same size; it was 1024 by 768.

You know, we all had that same computer size and there really was only one main browser in use, and every other browser that you might be able to download and install kind of played by the same rules.

Contrast that with today. Right now I have, if you can see my setup here, I've got a two screen layout and it's an array, that is, you know, combined is 7680 by 2048 pixels. So it's just, it's huge. But I've also got an iPad Pro; I have an iPhone 11; and I've even got an Apple Watch. Now, all of these devices have access to the internet and access to your website.

Now this is not a history lesson, but it does provide some context for what I'm about to say.

I hate WordPress. Now, more accurately, I hate the internet. Now as a designer, you know, design is about precision and there is absolutely nothing precision about the web. And it's

because we've got all of these different devices that can connect; and so the minute that you try to design a layout, you've got to design it for, you know, multiple devices and there are so many devices now that can connect to the internet, it is virtually impossible to do a really great job with that. So there really is nothing precise about the web.

It really comes down to functionality. Can your website function across all of those platforms? And I would say that, you know WordPress, when it comes to functionality, is actually number one, (number one, when it comes to functionality).

I actually designed all of the websites that I that I do for my clients, are on WordPress. And, you know, depending on who you ask, WordPress accounts for about 60% of the web.

So what is WordPress? WordPress is an open source framework built on PHP that uses a MySQL database to generate dynamic pages.

Now, a couple of years ago I spoke at the WordPress users conference here in Salt Lake City, and they all knew what I meant by that, but if we were live and I could ask that question now, "How many, you know, show of hands, how many of you knew what I meant?" Here's the good thing. You don't need to know what that means. All you really need to know is that WordPress dynamically generates pages based on browser size and functionality.

Now, that's the good news. The bad news is that WordPress dynamically generates pages based on browser size and functionality. So basically it's like I tell my kids, "You get what you get. And you don't throw a fit." OK, so we've reached that point in my presentation where what they asked me to talk about and what you need me to talk about are going to take two separate paths.

What they asked me to talk about was building your own website with WordPress. What you need me to talk about is building your own website and having it do everything that you needed to do.

Now, since I can't get any feedback from you in this presentation, I'm going to assume that you're all okay with that. That we're, we're just gonna, we're just going to have a chat here. Okay.

So let's get real. All right, let me get back to this here. I'm going to share screens. And I did a Google for what is the best website builders in the US for 2020. This was the top hit. Now this list here is everything, every website, or every website builder, that is in existence in this top ten

list, and not even in existence; this is the top ten. Now WordPress is on this list, as you can see here, but it's the only one that gets a complex rating for ease of use, okay.

Now the reason it is so complex is because it is so versatile, but I would say if you're just building one website for your business, WordPress may not be the best tool for you. There's actually a lot of tools out there that you can see here that are in the simple category or moderate as far as ease of use is concerned, and WordPress actually comes with a pretty high learning curve.

Now that being said, like I said, I use WordPress myself when I'm building for clients and I will tell you that, here's how it goes is I will be looking for a feature, and I know it exists because I've done it before, but I cannot remember how to get there.

And so I end up going to a Google search or a YouTube search, and I ask YouTube, "How do I adjust the size of the menu icon," and up pops a video and it tells me how to do it. And then I'm like, "Oh yeah that's right. That's how you do it." But there are so many things like that where they have these features that are just buried in menus upon menus upon menus, and it is so difficult to be able to find that stuff if you're not doing it on a regular basis. I have built probably I mean, honestly, I would say well over 100 websites using WordPress and when WordPress began, it was extremely difficult. It's gotten better over the years and it's actually gotten, you know, to where it actually looks pretty decent.

I'm going to show you a couple of things with regard to WordPress, but we're not going to talk about WordPress today.

What I really want you to talk, what I really want to teach you is that there are ways to build your own website and I assume that's really why you're here, is to build your own website; and you know, you're not looking to build a you know a web design company; you're just actually looking to get your own website out there and, you know, that is really the core of what we're doing here today. So with that, I want to first of all, maybe just talk about. . .

Let's, back up. What I want to talk about first is this—I want to talk about. . .

I want to talk about okay, so, so any of these solutions that I just showed you, they've got all of these videos—step-by-step, free videos on YouTube that describe exactly how to use them, and how to how to build with them. So whether it's Wix, or Squarespace, or even WordPress, there are, step-by-step, very detailed videos that you can find on YouTube.

In the few minutes that I have you today, I don't think that we could get very useful information out of that and in very much detail, so I do want to encourage you to start using, if you haven't already, start using YouTube. I call it YouTube University because it really does allow you to find ways to do things. I mean, I have repaired vehicles. I, just the other day, our air conditioner went out and I figured out how to fix it based on a YouTube video.

And so, YouTube is actually, is actually just this amazing resource. So really, if you take a look at a list that top 10 list or something similar, pick one. Just pick one and run with it.

Any tool that you use to build your own website is going to have its own learning curve. But really, really, we have to start with a foundation, okay.

Here's something I want you to understand, is that building a website and hoping that it will grow your business is kind of like self-publishing a book to Amazon and just hoping it will sell.

There are so many websites out there and so many people trying to get noticed on the internet, that it is actually very difficult to create that, such that when somebody does a Google search. . . In fact, I did a Google search earlier for, for editors in Utah, okay. I know that that's kind of the theme of this conference, maybe some of you are editor, some of your not; but the concept being that when I did that search, there there was nobody—nobody that I could find. There were a couple of hits for publishers. There were a couple of hits for, you know, things like that. And then about halfway down that first page I got to people who are running ads on Google, and they were editors, and they were, you know, touting their services, but it was it was way down there. So in order for you to show up in a Google search is actually pretty difficult to do. Now, that being said, what I want you to start with is really a foundation of, why do you want a website.

Understanding that is critical to getting your, ideas and your information down on paper and then eventually into a website, okay. So, you may want to just sell stuff; you may want to, you know, be able to describe your business; you may want to schedule appointments; you may want to allow clients to submit their work; you may just want people to find your phone number.

Or even more importantly, you may want to build your list. And so first question I want you to ask yourself is, who are you trying to reach.

The question is, who is your target audience, okay. Now, if you had fifteen minutes in front of an audience of a thousand people who are your ideal clients, what would you tell them? All you've got is fifteen minutes and there's a thousand of them there, so you're not talking to them one on

one. What is it that they need that you can provide? Write that down. Actually come up with this—essentially, this is your, website manifesto. This is why you're going to be online, okay. So what would you ask those people? What would you want to have them do? What action do you want them to take? What questions do you end up having to answer over and over and over again as you talk to people individually? What questions do they ask you, as a service provider, that you could answer in your website in a frequently asked questions section? All of those things that you're going to write down, combine to create your website manifesto.

Alright, so now we get to the most important part of your website and that is your logo. You should spend at least three months, designing your logo.

Now, of course, I'm kidding. But you'd be surprised; you'd be surprised how many people agonize over their logo for their website and even spend thousands of dollars on getting that logo designed.

I want you to think about, how many products or how many services have you purchased based on that person's logo? Now, having a bad logo is maybe a reason that you didn't purchase, okay. I doubt it, but it really is something that does not matter as much as everyone that I work with makes it out to be.

For the most part, what you want to do when you're designing your logo, is you want to picture it on a postage stamp.

If you can identify that logo in a postage stamp size, then you've done it right. It should look great in black and white, and it should be very easy to read it on that postage stamp size in black and white. Now, that doesn't mean that you can't design it larger and with more color and all of that as well.

When I design a logo, I do that; I actually start out with the postage stamp black and white size, and then I make several different versions. So there's a full color, maybe some 3D, you know shadows and things like that, that would be featured, you know, big on a website, but then it also works in in that smaller, postage stamp size. So do not spend so much time building your logo, because that's not what matters. What really matters is the content of your website. Now, if you can imagine, when you get somebody to your website, you've got. . . number one, you've got seven seconds to catch their attention. If I can't decide what you do in seven seconds on being on your website, then I'm gone.

If I can't understand what you're about, what you provide, how you could help me, then I'm gone, I'm on to the next one. And that is the typical, the typical attention span of the world, as well as your audience. So very first thing, it needs to be unambiguous. What is it that you provide? And this can be in just like a one liner really, okay.

Video is very important. And I would say that if you have the ability to create an intro video, for your website, where you're talking to your target audience directly, that is going to get watched ten times more than a paragraph will get read, okay.

Video does an interesting, interesting thing. Video will have you connect with your audience right away; they'll get to know who you are; and then through the content of your video, they get to know what you're about, but they'll also get to see your personality—so you should let your personality shine through in that video.

You should also, you know, try to really explain who your ideal client is and what you expect from them, and what they can expect from you, okay. If you do that, and you've got that placed in, you know, in the first seven seconds of your website, you know, you're going to have a lot more success in keeping people on. Now the next bit of your website really is, you know, talking about your services, how they work with you, what type of people that you are looking to work with, and what you provide for them.

You should also list, like, what are the requirements to work with you, okay. So you know, this is so difficult, because if I was there live with you, I would, I would be asking a ton of questions right now.

You know, what is it that you do? How do you connect with your client? I would be asking all of these questions and, you know, actually I am, you know this presentation isn't going to be very long because after the presentation, I understand that I'm going to come on live during this and we will have this question and answer session, okay.

And so, to me that's very important because building a website is extremely specific to you. If your website isn't specific to you, then why have a website? What's the point of going through all that pain and effort of just having a website because somebody told you you needed a website? You can actually, you know, run a very successful business without a website. You know, there are ways to connect with clients through social media outlets—through Instagram, through Facebook—and, you know, never send them to your website. Now that's pretty rare. I will grant you that. But the point I'm trying to make is that, if you've got a website just for the sake of having a website, don't bother. Nobody's going to go there, okay.

The next thing that I want to talk about is, getting people to your website. So really, really, really, the path to your website is through social media, number one. That's going to be the number one access to your website. When you're on social media and somebody asks a question, you say, you answer the question, "Hey, here's a total guideline. Jump over to my website," and give them a direct link to a download that they can access that answers in way more detail than you could post in just a reply or a response on a Facebook post.

That's such a great way to interact with people and get them over there, where your website is your full-time salesperson.

That website should be able to answer their questions, be able to give them guidance, be able to point them in the right direction and ultimately help them decide to work with you, right. So that is very important, such that, you know, you have to drive traffic to your website. So there's social media is number one, okay. Public speaking.

When you are speaking to an audience such like this, giving them access to your website is an excellent way to, you know, get people to go there; especially if you're in front of that audience of a thousand people, you're not going to be able to gather the contact information from all of those thousand people, or even the ones in that thousand person audience who want to work with you. But all you have to do once is say go to my website, and, you know, give them something. Give them, it's called an ethical bribe. And what you're doing is you're giving them something in return for their contact information.

Once you've got their contact information, now you are in the driver's seat. You have the ability to reach out to them to, you know, even interact with them on a one-on-one basis if you should choose to do so.

But you've got that ability to then continue to have that conversation and make it more meaningful to them, where that audience of a thousand people, you're just kind of throwing out ideas, you're throwing out, you know, ways that, you know, that they can accomplish what they want to accomplish and things of that sort, okay.

So, I know that you were hoping to maybe get step-by-step of how to use WordPress to build your website, but I hope that what we've done here is begin a dialogue that will allow you to see what you can do with a website and why you want a website in the first place, because that's such a better foundation for where you want to go with this, than me just telling you the step-by-steps of WordPress.

So I guess one more thing that I wanted to talk about is just kind of how, you know, how to set up your own personal website. First off, you've got to find a domain name that works, okay. Hopefully you've already got your domain name. You've got it registered. Godaddy. . .

Search domain names godaddy.com and check that out because that's really where this all starts.

And then you're going to need to find hosting. So if, if we were to compare your website to, like a house, right, so your domain name is the house, and your website—the pages and everything—that's the house, but the hosting is the land where where the website sits. You can expect to pay anywhere from \$75 to \$100 per year for hosting of your website. Now, if you go with some of the other website builders that we talked about, Wix or Squarespace, those include hosting with that price. So you want to calculate that in there. If you're using WordPress, WordPress itself is free.

WordPress is what's called an open source, open-source tool, software, which means that it was built by a community of people who wanted to just give it away for free, and and so you can install that and, you know, it does not cost you anything to run WordPress. But you still need a hosting company like GoDaddy in order to house your WordPress site.

But if you go to. . . let me share again screens. . . this one, okay. And we go to. . . Okay, so let's just go back to. . . So you're going to set up your GoDaddy account. Right here, on their page is a link to WordPress. So all you gotta to do is click on WordPress, and then you're going to click Get started, and that's going to give you the options for hosting that WordPress site.

You notice over here you've got price tag of \$467—what that's doing is actually 36 months of hosting. So if you scroll down on this page, you can select you know, 12 months and the prices go smaller each month for the longer term that you go. So if you want to pay for that up front, and you'd be better off. For this honestly, like for most of you, the basics, the basic plan, would work just fine.

You know, single site, ideal for up to 25,000 monthly visitors and the daily backup that is important. Like I said WordPress is extremely complex and I've actually had Wordpress sites explode. For whatever reason, something gets haywire and overnight, they just explode. And so having that daily backup has saved my, Saved my tail more times than I can tell you. Doesn't happen very often, don't get me wrong, but it does happen. So that just kind of gives you an idea. Once you select a plan and pay your annual fee here, then what, what it gives you, is it



gives you just a simple installation script that you go through and then you access the back end of your WordPress site and, you know, and go from there. So, I wanted to maybe kind of just give you a, an example of what WordPress looks like. So this is Angie's website, [calliopewritingcoach.com](http://calliopewritingcoach.com), and so you can see that, you know, this is WordPress. We've got video running in the background here and, and there's my beautiful girl, Angie. And so it just cycles through this video, right, so then you scroll down and you know you get, a lot of ability to create just a very beautiful website, adding in testimonials and everything like that.

This is all done on WordPress, okay. So there's access to the courses and you can see it's a very beautiful design, very beautiful website. You've got animations going on. All of this is possible with WordPress. Now this is, there's a lot of I guess what I would call next-level stuff going on here, but let me show you what the back end of WordPress looks like. if I can spell it.

So when you log into the back-end, here is everything that goes on. And so there are pages that you build. So I mean, we've got two pages, full of (maybe just basically one), but twenty-two pages for this website. Now, not all of them are live, but twenty-two pages; each page has its own things going on.

We've got themes installed and theme builder, theme customizer—so when you go in here, you have the ability then to customize how this page looks, you know, the header, the navigation the footer, the buttons, the blog, the mobile styles. All of these settings here, they go about four layers deep and allow you to make changes. But you can see the complexity; there's actually six different footer areas that you can use, so, this is this section down here in the footer.

WordPress is an incredibly powerful tool, don't get me wrong, but it's got a pretty steep learning curve. And if you are committed to that, and you really want some advanced, you know, some advanced options, there are plugins that, I mean there are thousands of plugins. If you can imagine it, there's probably a WordPress plugin that will help you accomplish that.

So WordPress is, again, it's an incredibly powerful tool, but if you're only going to build one website, for yourself, I would tell you that there are lots easier ways to do it than WordPress. And with that, I want to thank you so much for listening to me ramble.

I really want to just open this up to question and answers because, I really think that's where we're going to get the information that you need in your hands. So with that, I'll turn it back to our moderator. Thank you so much. And let's go to question and answers.