

Yesterday, while I was doing a website review for service-based business something, became painfully clear.

The average business owner that's not in WordPress trenches every day is being caught totally off guard with some of the latest WordPress updates.

So what's happening with WordPress?

What's all the flurry in our own community about?

Well, WordPress has released V5 code named **Gutenberg**.

To put this in perspective, V4 came out two years ago.

This means there have been at least two whole years of development going into this release.

You can only imagine what that means.

This is no small update.

Gutenberg is a wonderful upgrade for WordPress especially those that are new to WordPress.

But to existing users, it means learning to navigate an "enhanced" platform. aka .. something new

A little history.

When WordPress first came out over 10 years ago, you almost needed to know HTML to build a page that helps anything more than text and links.

The 1st major enhancement was the inclusion of a visual editor.

This made the editor experience a bit more like Microsoft office.

With time the community expanded on this concept creating page-builders like **Beaver Builder, Divi Builder & Elementor** to provide small business owners and developers alike the ability to create pages & post within WordPress that contain enhancements like columns, button, slider, etc with ease.

Gutenberg: Going beyond the Visual Editor experience (3:00)

Gutenberg is the integration of a basic page-builder into the core of WordPress.

Now instead of a single section in which to place all your page content. You now have something called blocks.

These blocks allow you to build up your page much like the previously mentioned page builder do.

That said, at Mozak Design we plan to continue the use of the premium page builders with our clients. We believe that they will always extend the basics provided by the WordPress core.

That said, Gutenberg is a huge leap forward users only needing basic starter sites.

Gutenberg also demonstrates WordPress' awareness of the hard truth that in technology that you either keep innovating or you die.

WordPress is very reliable and popular among all CMS (Content Management System) powering of 30% of the web.

But as the demands for features grow over time, WordPress must expand its core functionality to cope up with these demands or trends.

However, while this ensures WordPress' relevance, it causes some growing pain for existing users.

Gutenberg's SEO Implications

Industry SEO expert Robert Nissenbaum from Tactical Social Media highlights an additional benefit of the new Gutenberg block system in his post: [Why Gutenberg?](#)

Gutenberg provides the ability for only specific content blocks to be delivered based on search query AND the device used for the search by allowing content to be published as a series of interconnected, yet independent blocks.

- [Robert Nissenbaum](#)

So what does this mean?

It means that with the website content now broken into blocks it makes is easier on today's and future devices to load only the parts of a web page they are interested vs the entire page.

This improved speed of accessing content and the ability to show a viewer only the part of the page they are interested in gives WordPress websites a leg up in the world of SEO going forward.

The difference between the Gutenberg Plugin and WordPress 5.0 (4:42)

Now, there is a plugin available for you to test out Gutenberg on your current site even if you are still on WordPress 4.0-4.9. This will enable you to experience the new system for posting or creating pages before formally updating.

That said, in my option, there is the *potential* for a BIG difference between the Gutenberg the plugin and the actual WordPress core update.

Thus, it is my recommendation that users wait until after January 2019 to perform the official WordPress

update on their website.

Well-known web hosts such as WP Engine and Pressable are discouraging users from updating to WordPress 5.0 until the community has a handle on any unexpected compatibility issues.

The team at Yoast SEO expressed their concern with the bumps and issues that users will face over the next couple of months.

Even Matt Mullenweg, the founder of WordPress said to expect frequent software updates containing bug fixes in Q1 of 2019.

[Back to my story ...](#)

During my Website Review, I noticed that she had the BOTH the Gutenberg plug-in installed and activated and the Divi page builder.

The site was a mess as both plugins were trying to achieve the same goal and stepping all over each other so to speak. Never a good thing.

This is EXACTLY my concern and word of caution for the Gutenberg update.

While the core WordPress will be ready and robust at release what about all the other themes & plugins that are installed on user sites that may or may not be updated and bug feed in their integration with the new WordPress code?

This is my fear for the majority of small business owners using WordPress who simply press update without following the [protocol of using a Staging Site](#).

As a WordPress website developer with over 10yrs of experience, I have little concerns. I know how to use a Staging Site, update software, test and when needed, roll back changes.

But what about the small business owner trying to manage their own website?

My goal is not to scare users away from WordPress.

I truly believe it is the BEST PLATFORM for small business websites.

However, I do feel that it presents a challenge for business owners who are not yet ready to invest in having a Website Agency take care of the [Monthly Maintenance and Updating of their website](#).

[So what's a small business owner to do?](#)

If you've got a pretty basic site:

- You're not using anything fancy like Divi builder, Beaver builder, Avada Fusion builder

- You are not using Advanced Custom post types or other special plugins

You probably can safely upgrade.

You still want to you back up your website first, but it's probably pretty safe to click the update button.

However, if you:

- Using a Page-builder like Divi, Fusion, Beaver Builder, Elementor, Visual Composer
- Have Advanced Custom Post types
- Have custom anything

I would say:

- First, back up your site. This is a must period.
- Prior to January 2019: hold off updating unless there is a pressing reason.
- After January 2019: Install & activate the plugin: **Classic Editor**.
This is plugin is guaranteed to be supported through 2021. This basically plugin says, I know you upgrade your WordPress website to V5, but I don't want to see any of the Gutenberg enhancements, just keep things the way they were.

Now, again, I don't know that even with this plugin the update, at least initially it's going to be seamless. But, your odds are better.

And if you update and life go sideways, reach out to a WordPress developer like myself.

Even within the WordPress community, there is grumbling.

I will be honest, this update is controversial even within the WordPress community.

As many of you know I have spoken a many a WordCamp. WordCamp US is the big conference here in the states.

It's where the best of the best come to speak and most industry leaders, if they only choose to attend a single WordCamp a year, it's often this one.

So you can imagine the upset when WordPress announced it was launched V5 at the exact same time as the 2018 US WordCamp Conference.

Many of us were heartbroken to WordPress related software owners cancel their flight so they could be available should their customer needs them.

The other thing that's coming is PHP 7.2.

I know. Haven't I shared enough bad news?

Alas, if you're managing your own site, you gotta know this.

PHP is one of the software that websites are run on.

PHP 7.2 is coming out in January and the prior version's php5.6 and php7.0 are hitting end-of-life.

What does this mean?

Means they're not being updated, it's not being supported.

It means that speed enhancements, security fixes, all of these things are going into php7.2, not the old ones.

It means you have no choice but to update.

Really good hosts like WP Engine are doing two things:

- First, they are pushing the updates to all sites they host in January
- Second, they're providing a php7.2 simulator so you can test your site pre-update

My experience with php7.2 this far has been *mostly* smooth.

I say mostly because 2 of the ~50 [websites I maintain on care plans](#) did result in the white-screen-of-death and required coding work to ensure their compatibility.

This is why I get frustrated with low-end hosts like GoDaddy.

Not only do they not ensure your site is updated to the latest software, but they provide no previewing features so you can update with confidence.

Please be on a high-end WordPress Host

I know I tend to hop on a soapbox about this but I work on [small business WordPress websites](#) day in and day out.

With high-end host not only do you get the above mention perks, but most include faster servers and hack protection.

For an extra ~\$200 a year. To me, it's a priceless no-brainer.

... okay ... I'll get off the box now ☐

One last thing ...

One thing I'm learning the more I connect with small business owners who are managing their own sites, for them, every update is scary.

My [Care Plan clients](#) have a luxury of having someone on their team who knows what buttons to click, so their experience is pretty consistent. They're not wondering what to do and if they do they have someone to email.

When you are managing your own site, because you need to at this phase of your business, sometimes you click buttons and things are ok, other times things blow up.

That's what happened to the person I worked with yesterday.

Because of this, I am now offering a new service: Website TuneUps

These are Zoom based collaborative real-time working sessions.

During two, one-hour collaborative Zoom meetings we fix up anything you want on your site real-time.

And as a bonus, you get to ask me questions like: Why the hell is it doing this?

It's a total win-win!

I enjoy helping those who are still in the trenches and they got to be able to pick someone brain like me who's been doing it over 10 years and I have learned the hard way!

[That's all she wrote for today.](#)

Keep an eye out for more pop up website reviews and other things as there's news on the WordPress front as we move into this new life of WordPress 5.0 Gutenberg and Block editing.

It's going to be exciting, but it may have a few hair-pulling moments as we get excited.

Have a fabulous day!

Till next time,

