

*Customizing WordPress for*  
**Better Audience Engagement**  
**AND MORE SALES**



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# ***CUSTOMIZING WORDPRESS FOR BETTER AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND MORE SALES***

When doing business online nothing is as important as your website. Your website gives potential customers their first impression of your business and even you, personally. Your website needs to be eye-catching and interesting enough to bring them in and keep looking. However, it should not be so outrageous or obnoxious that it frightens potential customers away. In the not too distant past, it was very difficult to get a business website up and going. You had to hire professional coders. It could be very expensive.

Today, while you can still hire people, you have another choice with WordPress. Self-hosted WordPress offers you the ability to put up a professional website on your own or hire a professional to do it for you. This can be done at a much lower cost than what it would have cost you to hire a coder in the past. In fact, you can get a WordPress website up in just a few days at a fraction of the cost of the old way.

It's important to realize that you need to customize your WordPress for better audience engagement to make more sales. Typically, WordPress themes run on a framework of some kind and need some adjusting to make them unique to your business and look the way that you want them to look. The samples you see of themes usually have some basic set up using plugins, widgets, menu items and more to make it look and behave a particular way. To make your WordPress website stand out and be user-friendly for your audience, you'll need to do the same.

Let's go over some definitions, in case you are not familiar.

- **Framework & Themes** -- The framework is where all the themes code for functionality lives, and the theme, called a child theme adds to the style of the site. By using a framework, and a child theme it reduces issues with updating the core of WordPress so that you don't lose your customizations. Most theme developers have specific frameworks they work with, such as the [Genesis Framework by Studiopress](#).
- **Widgets** -- Depending up the theme you choose, you can put widgets in various spots, arrange, and move them, mostly in the sidebars, headers and footers of your website. You can find widgets in your dashboard by going to appearance, then widgets. Some themes are widget-ready in other areas, besides the ones mentioned above. A widget ready area refers to an area where you can use a plugin to add functionality to that area of the site.
- **Plugins** -- These are nifty little programs that you can add to your WordPress to increase the functionality of your website. They can add many more features such as an easy way to add podcasts, videos, advertisements, newsletter signup sheets, security, backup, analytics and more. Plugins extend the functionality of your website or blog without someone touching the code that is in the framework, or theme and can easily be deleted or changed.
- **Menus** -- This is your website's navigation. With WordPress, you have a lot of control over the appearance of your menu items. How much control you have often depends on

the theme you've chosen as well as the various plugins that can help give you even more control. The key is to make the navigation menus easy to find and use.

Understanding the terminology will help you understand this report a lot better. Now, let's get started with learning about how to choose the right look, feel and functionality of your website so that you can make more sales. It all starts with choosing the right WordPress framework and theme for your website.

## Choosing Your WordPress Framework & Theme

When deciding to use WordPress to build your website you'll be confronted with a multitude of choices for WordPress frameworks and themes. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands. There are free themes and premium themes. It's important to realize that by using a free theme, you will be more limited than if you choose a premium theme from a well-respected and known theme developer.

### Popular Frameworks & Themes



[Studiopress.com](http://Studiopress.com) -- Built on the Genesis framework, Studiopress child themes are loved far and wide for their versatility and clean code. It's very secure and they offer a lot of tutorials to make it easy to use. They have great support via their forum too.



[Elegantthemes.com](http://Elegantthemes.com) -- Built on the Divi framework, they are known for their high quality themes. There are many pre-built themes to choose from that might work for what you need. They are highly customizable and beautiful. Their Divi Builder allows you to visually design a website the way you want it via dragging and dropping.



[Pagelines.com](http://Pagelines.com) -- Built on the DMS framework, which allows you to drag and drop to build a desirable website using WordPress without understanding code. They also have several child themes designed for their framework that are useful. This is mostly for beginners as the framework is limited compared to the others. However, sometimes that's a good then so you're not overwhelmed.



[DIYThemes](#) -- The Thesis 2 framework is loved by many designers due to the huge amount of control they can have with Thesis. You start with Thesis and built it how you want. Instead of themes, you use skins.

The whole thing is drag and drop, which many people prefer if they are visual thinkers. Plus, the customizations you can make are almost limitless, even if you don't understand code.

There are, of course, free themes. You'll get a free theme or two the moment you install WordPress onto your server. While the basic theme that comes with your first install of WordPress is perfectly fine and usable, it's highly recommended that you choose a premium framework and theme to use when building a profitable business site.

## **Adding Functionality to Your Website or Blog**

Many frameworks and themes come with some functionality already. It'll be right in the code of your WordPress site. Inside your WordPress theme is a file called functions.php, which adds functionality to your site and will only work with that theme. Don't worry; you don't really need to understand anything about coding to make these things work. For instance, if you have a theme now with an image slider on the home page, and then you switch to a theme without it, you'll lose that slider. Thankfully, there is another way to add functionality to your website by using plugins.

Once you add a plugin, even when you change themes the plugin will go with it. This is why you should be aware of what functions any particular theme already has so you can disable and delete a particular plugin to avoid conflicts. Both frameworks and child themes can have function.php files. If you know to code, you can add your own or add to the one that exists. Just be careful not to duplicate efforts with the functions.php file and individual plugins.

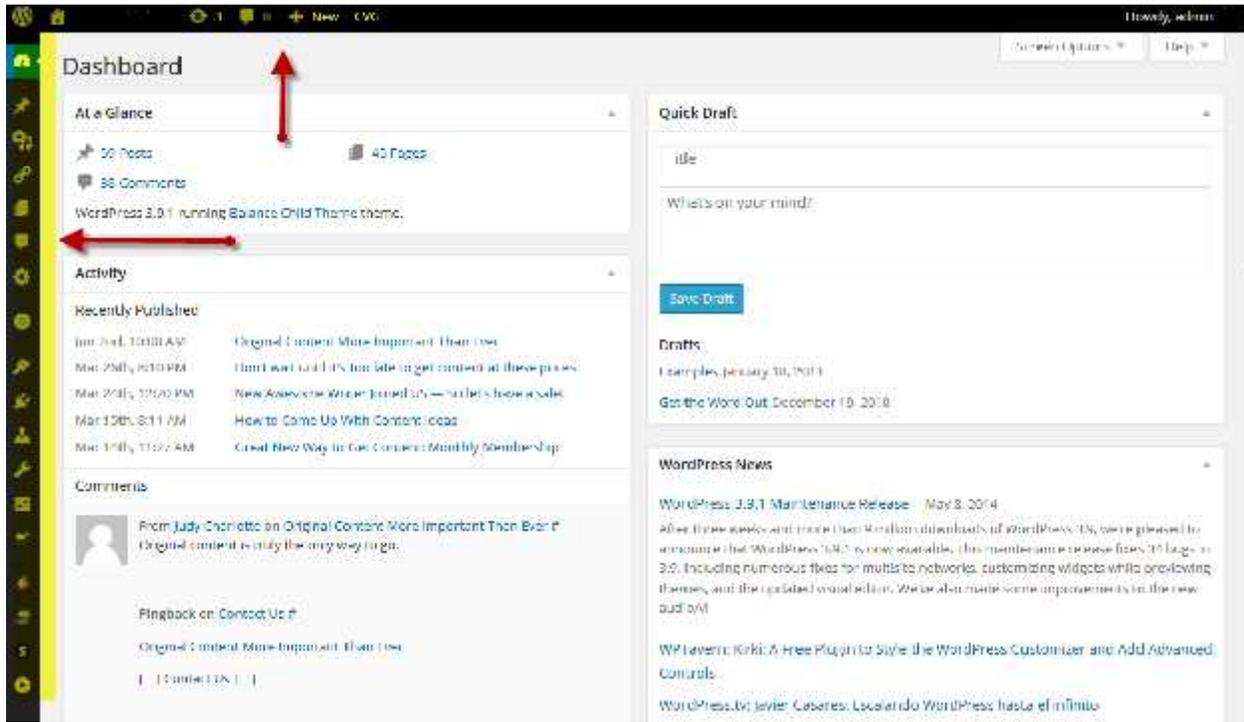
Some functions most business owners who are selling products want and need with their site are:

- Automatic Backup
- Autoresponder Integration
- Broken Link Checker
- Commenting System
- Easy SEO
- Google Analytics
- Lead Collection
- Link Redirect
- Link Shortener
- Security
- SEO Friendly Images
- Shopping Cart / Download Manager
- Site Map Generator
- Social Media Integration

- Spam Protection

Many of the themes mentioned above already have some of this functionality, or you can easily add it with various plugins. If you go to the [Wordpress.org website](http://Wordpress.org) you can look at a wide range of plugins that you can use. You can find both free and premium plugins to help you accomplish what you need to accomplish.

Your framework or theme can be customized using the options available from the Dashboard of your WordPress installation. Most dashboards look similar unless they've had some customization already added. This is what the collapsed Dashboard looks like inside Genesis Framework. You can click on the collapse menu link at the very bottom to maximize the tool bar.



The red arrows are pointing toward two areas where you can click to open dropdown menus, which allow you to customize your WordPress website. When you click on them, you'll be given many choices. Your new installation probably doesn't have as much as this older installation has, but it will come with some functionality already. It's a good idea to click around and find out what is inside your dashboard so you can determine how you can customize your particular chosen theme.

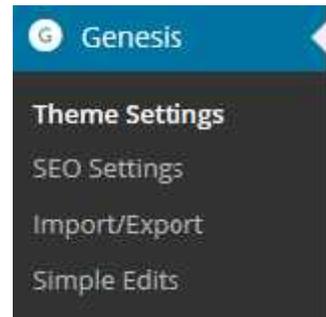
Inside you'll have many choices such as:

- **Posts** -- This is where you will go to write or edit blog posts.
- **Media** -- This is where you will upload images and graphics to use on your website and in blog posts.
- **Links** -- If you want to have a link list such as resources, tools, blogs you like, products you sell, you can put them here.
- **Pages** -- If you want to build a new page, that is not a blog page, such as an about page, product page, or other more static page you'd use this option.

- **Comments** -- You can see and monitor comments here, depending upon the functionality of your theme or the plugins you've added.
- **Contact** -- If you've added a contact form, or your theme comes with one already, this is where you'd customize it and grab the code to put it on the pages you want.
- **Genesis** -- Anything to do with editing the framework would be found here.
- **Appearance** -- Anything to do with changing the way your website looks is located here such as widgets, menus, headers and more.
- **Plugins** -- If you've added a plugin, or your theme already had plugins, they will be viewable, and editable here.
- **Users** -- Anyone you want to add to your site such as a staff member, blogger, author, web designer, etc., can be added or deleted here.
- **Settings** -- This is where the general settings of your website and / or blog are located. You can change your site title, tagline, permalinks, email address, set the time, and default memberships if you wish.

You'll have more or less options, depending upon the theme's built-in functionality and the plugins you choose to add. The main items you will concern yourself with in terms of customizing your home page for this theme are Genesis and Appearance.

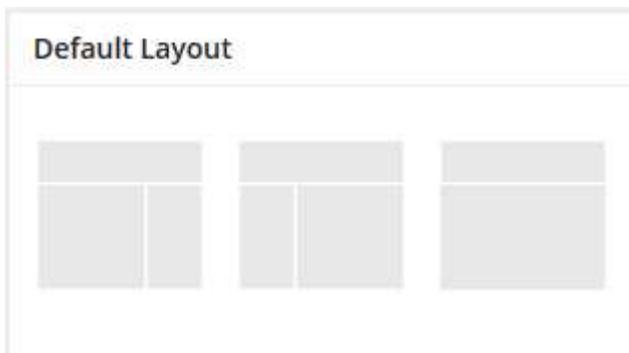
If you click on Genesis in the maximized view, a new menu appears and looks like the image to the right. Inside of these menu items, you can adjust the Genesis framework theme settings, SEO settings and more. These are choices built right into the Genesis framework. Note that Simple Edits is a Genesis specific plugin.



If you click on Theme Settings, a dropdown menu will appear to the right, showing you many choices such as whether or not and how you want to handle framework updates. You'll also be able to change the style color from the default color to any others the theme creator has included.

From here, you'll also be able to change your default layout. The layout is very important because when someone comes to your home page you want them to notice the point of your website right away.

This theme allows three layout options:



Just click one, and scroll down to keep up with customizing.

The other way to customize your home page is by clicking Appearance instead of Theme Settings. When you click appearance you get the following choices: Themes, Customize, Widgets, Menus, Headers, and Editor. With each one, you can choose to make your website different. Once you've chosen your theme, then you can click Customize and it will give you a lot of different choices.

For example, the Balance child theme, used in this example, offers you the ability to change and alter all of the following:

- Site Title & Tagline
- Colors
- Header Image
- Navigation
- Static Front Page
- Widgets in All Areas

If you click Menus this is where you can customize your menu options. Your menu is very important because this is how people will find their way around your site. Using custom menus you can create multiple menus and have them appear on different areas of your site using the widget options.

## **Making Your Home Page Stand Out**

Other than when you send visitors to certain landing pages, they click through to read a specific article or blog post they are going to land on your Home Page. Making your home page stand out is imperative. You only have a few seconds, at the most, to hook your visitor. The page needs to be reflective of your vision, mission and goals, but present them in such a way that your audience feels as if this page is just for them.

The awesome thing about WordPress is that no matter what theme you select you can customize and adjust the theme and the home page to better fit what you need and what your audience wants. What your home page looks like will depend on two factors; your audience and your point of having a webpage. If your point of having a webpage is to sell products, then that should be the main focus of your home page. If your point of having a webpage is to educate, then content will be the focus of your home page.

The standard theme may have many elements on the home page such as sidebars, headers, footers, logos, and taglines. Advertising elements may even be native on your home page depending upon the theme that you choose. With WordPress, most of this is customizable right inside your theme, especially if you choose a good, quality theme. The thing you most want on your home page is for it to be clear and tell your story while being fully actionable.

In general, you want the following 7 elements on your home page:

1. **Your Business Name & Tagline** – This may include using a logo of some sort or a header, but the name should be someplace on your home page. No longer do you have to put it right at the top, many different themes have different arrangements of great home pages with different layouts with that information showing.

2. **A Differentiator** – You have about 2 or 3 seconds to draw your visitor in to read your content and look at your product. That means if your website is product focused it should be pictured above the fold right where people will look for it. If your website is mostly about content, then that should be apparent right from first load. Maybe your home page has a video introduction, or slide show that tells your product's story.
3. **User-Friendly Navigation** – Don't overwhelm site visitors with too many choices on your home page. Give them enough navigation choices so they can easily find their way around your site, but make it simple and straightforward. Your primary menu should be easy to understand and lead your visitor right where they need to be. With custom menu options inside WordPress, you can easily create menus using main pages, categories, or even links to your other websites.
4. **A Unified Look & Feel** – It's easy to do with WordPress themes, but since you get to add in your own logos, images and other graphics; be sure that they match and tie together and do not distract from your main point. You can also use fonts to tie everything together, along with graphics and color. In fact, your entire home page can be void of graphics all together with use of specialized fonts.
5. **Social Media Links** – Your home page should give your visitors another way to connect with you via social media links. Whatever social media you're part of should be front and center allowing you to capture your audience's information for future connections, a great use of secondary menus.
6. **The Main Point** – Front and center, above the fold should be the main point on your home page. If your main point is content, then users should easily be able to read or click to read the content you want to share. If the main point is a product, that product needs to be above the fold, instead of content on your home page. It's okay with WordPress to have essentially a static home page, and another menu item then becomes the blog page.
7. **Informative Footer** -- Don't discount the importance of a good footer on the home page. People get upset if they cannot find out how to contact you, get help, or otherwise connect with you. The menu items are fine, but it's wise to have your address, phone number and other important information visible in the footer.

Your ability to have all these things and more on your home page is not limited in any way by using WordPress to build your website, whether product focused on content focused. WordPress can revolutionize your business in so many ways.

## Wrapping It Up

We've gone over a lot of information about customizing your Wordpress for better audience engagement and more sales. If you consider the factors mentioned in this report and use what you learned to make your WordPress work for your audience, product, and niche, you will increase your sales exponentially.



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