

Danny's Word Camp Providence 2014 Talk

Danny: Hi everyone my name is Danny Santoro. I actually have a nice little presentation let me pull that up here for you. Okay so like I said my name is Danny Santoro, and today I'm going to talk about the flexibility of WooCommerce as a platform. So first just a little bit about me. I was born in east Cincinnati and I stayed there all my life where I graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a focus in video and web design. So it's kind of a broad little area but somehow I ended up more on the web design side and since then I've been working on web design, marketing, multi-media and ecommerce full time. So as part of that I've worked with a lot of different brands from startups to global brands, a lot of integrations and a lot of different platforms and content management systems, everything like that. So I kind of have a wide range of experience in different platforms. So the first thing I'd like to know is how do you guys Woo?

Danny: Have you ever used or heard of WooCommerce before?

Attendee: Yes.

Danny: Okay, has anyone ever actually installed it and used it?

Attendee: Yes.

Danny: Okay, so what's an example of something you sold?

Attendee: All kinds of dog products, collars, leashes.

Danny: Okay, so dog products. Alright well we'll come back to that in a minute so I can loop around there. I guess we'll just backtrack for a minute to kind of how I got involved with WooCommerce .

So the first time that I used word press it was like as a blogging thing, and I just couldn't get behind it. It just kind of seemed silly to use as an actual place to build a website. So that impression stuck with me for years. So I've heard of WooCommerce and I've played with it a little bit, but I still couldn't get past that stigma of it being kind of an edition to a blogging tool. So it was hard enough to sell clients on putting it on word press than imagine you know trying to sell them on a plugin for word press that really just wasn't well known and they just couldn't have any faith in.

And that entire time I was wrong.

So inevitably I came across a client that just had to use word press. They insisted on blogging and they just wanted to use that platform so I did a lot of research, I stayed up, I cried, I learned, I laughed, I got used to word press. So then I just kept looking for different themes because at that point I was hooked. And eventually I got tired of them all. There was nothing clean and basic and flexible that I could really build and modify and then I found canvas.

Canvas is a theme by WooThemes. And the whole idea of canvas is it's a very simple plain theme that you modify to fit your needs. So when the opportunity came to join the WooThemes team, I jumped in there right as soon as I could and was put on WooCommerce support. So that was interesting because I again still kind of thought WooCommerce was a joke, but this time I had a chance to really look into it and learn it the correct way.

So the important question is what is WooCommerce? And WooCommerce is a free plugin that's available on the word press repository that allows anyone to create their own online store to sell anything that they want. It's extremely lightweight at the core and flexible so a lot like word press its open source. As of two days ago when I got these metrics there was just over 280 contributors in less than 10% of which were actual woo team staff. So there's a lot of third party contribution and improvement and things like that. And since it's part of word press and we use native word press coding, developers love working with WooCommerce. They can use regular PHP hooks and take their code and they can develop in a fraction of the time than it would take to develop on a preparatory system like site core or one of those other typical content management systems.

WooCommerce has been growing pretty nicely in the past year or so. Right now it powers 17.77% of all ecommerce sites on the internet today, this week we actually passed 4.5 million downloads of WooCommerce and then the share in the top 100 e-commerce sites continues to grow. And you can find all that information at the builtwith.com/shop link right there, but compared to any other single platform we've far surpassed their usage statistics.

Okay now we're going to get more into comparison because everyone loves tables and you know we can really show this data. This is three major hosted platforms that are some of the most popular ways shops make their own ecommerce stores.

So shops applied WooCommerce and all of these plans are their cheaper plans. You can see all the pros and cons in between each; you know some of them have transaction fees, some of them have no storage cap, and then some of them even have unlimited amount of products. And that's all great; you know you could probably find something there that'll fit your business. But we're going to try to go as cheap as we can; we're going to try to make this from our home, without hiring developers, so let's look at WooCommerce. Since WooCommerce is a self-hosted setup, we'd need to purchase hosting, so following the line of the budget route, we'd be able to get a simple one site blue host subscription and we get unlimited bandwidth of \$9.99 per month. And then let's add that to the chart. Here we see the price per month; it's lower than all competitors. There are no transaction fees from WooCommerce alone. You have unlimited bandwidth, unlimited storage, unlimited products, and you can design completely whatever you want without having to pay their designers \$120 dollars an hour or more. And

then the flip side of that is those are just numbers and you know, a bunch of marketing slogans because, WooCommerce doesn't come with all those features and add-ons that shopify would or volusion would. And that's true, but that's kind of the point, with WooCommerce you control what's on your site and what you add to your site. So from the ground up you choose exactly what your site is, you get framework with word press, you choose a functionality with you plugins and you choose a style with your theme so in essence you buy only what you need and you cut out all those complications and confusions that the other services that include as bells and whistles and selling points and things that you would probably never even use.

So in general our code and philosophy at WooThemes is we keep things as simple and as smooth as possible for everyone involved, and I can find a good analogy on this whole process if we're looking to shop for a car.

So going into the analogy we're going to go car shopping. So the first thing you do when you buy a car, is you figure out what your needs are. So here's a sample solution that would be typical in Ohio where we get awful winters and it's just not a nice place to live. So the first thing we need to figure out what to do is what we need to buy, so in this sample situation say we only want one single vehicle instead of a work and play vehicle. We have a spouse and two kids so we need at least 4 comfortable seats and then since you're in Ohio you might have a larger plot of land you need to maintain including trees or bushes or rocks, anything like that. So you're going to need some sort of a truck. And then the Ohio winters can be rough so it means something that can handle the elements so four wheel drive, things like that. The first thing you would do is go straight to the dealer. You've always kind of wanted a red Ford, but when you get into the dealer he says, "Hey look, I have this black Ford, and it's an F-350 King Ranch, it's got everything you could imagine, seat warmers, which is great, it's got 20 inch cast wheels, and it even has dual DVD rear entertainment systems with wireless headphones," So great, you didn't even know that came in a car, so you're super excited, you pull out your pen, you're ready to sign, and then you see the price is 62,000 dollars. So that's \$900 a month for the next 6 years. So you know you kind of take a step back well, maybe I should try to figure out what this Goose Hitch knot so that way you do a little research on your own. Then when you get to the Ford website, you see the nice big build your car option, so you kind of start going through there, one by one, picking all the features. You pick what you need, you get the crew cab, a full bed, a nice sturdy cover and you can actually see that you can get some additional options the other tricked out one didn't have. So you choose those and you get rid of all the stuff you don't really need. You don't need that weird hook thing which you still aren't sure what it is, and you don't really need 2 DVD players in the back for the kids. So the moment of truth, we see what the damage is, and it's only \$42,000 dollars.

So what this demonstrates is that by customizing your options you saved 33% and you got a truck that fit your needs better. So why take any other approach when it comes to any other purchase?

So websites aren't cars, I know that, the best way we can compare this is through code bloat. So code bloat is something that every developer hates. When a site has so many features running and installed or plugins going on it tends to slow down even if you're not using those plugins and then it could cause a lot of conflicts and errors. And that's where it really makes it hard, because let's say you have a

WooCommerce shop, if you have a lot of third party extensions running, it's kind of hard for us to help because we're not sure what version of what software you have, and what modifications have been made and all that comes bundled in a lot of features in sources. So we take the clean slate approach. We give you a blank canvas theme and it's kind of like that car builder, you pick exactly what you need step by step, so that way you only buy what you actually use and if you ever needed to buy something else and expand down the road, you could.

So analogies aside there are a lot of other great things about WooCommerce and that constantly continues to improve. So let's see, we always let out free updates, so the latest update was September 10th, and that was Prowling Pangolin, I'm not sure what a Pangolin is to be honest, but I know it's some kind of spiked animal. So two big features we added there were a system for refunds, and then a simplified commerce gateway. So those are two pretty big additions that allow a lot of our users what they've been asking for, for months and months and we finally got it out there and we didn't actually need to ask them for anything or expect them to pay for those updates, we just come out with them because we knew a lot of people would enjoy them. So since that September 10th release, there's actually been four updates and then a fifth one is due sometime next week, so just continual improvement without anything on the user side.

We have a huge amount of support resources that really is just unparalleled, so we have open public documentation, community forums, and a knowledge base full of tutorials, one-on-one support, and everything like that. So our philosophy is that you don't have to come to us for every little change that you want to make or every little tweak that you want to do, is that we give you tutorials that show you how to do that, so instead of waiting 48 hours for us to answer a ticket, and say, "Oh okay that's going to be \$120 dollars." Whatever you want to fix you can just pop in a quick search in our knowledge base and there's your answer right there, we have video tutorials, walkthroughs, all from our developers and support and every single member of our chain contributes. And we even keep flexible to better help you guys, so in the past 6 months we've entirely changed our support strategy and have cut ticket times by at least 60% just in 6 months. So we get to users faster and hopefully solve their problems a lot quicker. So the best part about WooThemes is that everyone on the team really loves their job and we really want to improve our product. And we want to make sure that our customers are happy. So even though I initially brushed off WooCommerce, and WooThemes is just a kind of silly word press extension that could never seriously be used, at this point after having worked there for about 6 or 7 months now, I really couldn't recommend anything else to most companies and it's just an incredible plugin that can fit anything it needs, but you know I could say that all day so what I'm going to do, first I'm going to stop and let you guys ask me any questions, then I'm going to show you ways that it can get really flexible. So does anyone have questions?

Attendee: I do, yeah I have been using WooCommerce for a while now and I really, really love it, but I perpetually find a problem in reporting, so I wondered what you might suggest as what might go well hand in hand with WooCommerce for reporting? We're going to really need to see things like specific variations, statistics, sums or sales.

Danny: Right, so that's actually one of our sore spots that I have to say I've been trying to push for, for a while. Right now the best way that a lot of users can get good reporting tools is to export everything as a CSC and importing it into a cell or whatever platform they use. I can say anything too much without getting in trouble and probably giving away some stuff that's coming around, but we are aware of that problem and I believe that there's a plan moving forward for that. Till then the best thing that I've had most people get success with was export their CSC and manage it, but yes I am totally aware that's a problem and we see it on the forum everyday where someone just needs a better way to see their sales, or things about their product, or time. Yeah unfortunately I think that's the one biggest area we have as a company.

Attendee: I have a question, when are you looking to upgrade it so you can see it with the timeframe?

Danny: I don't have a timeframe, there's kind of two tracks that are following that area, there's one in the internal team that's kind of exploring it and seeing what we can do, and there's one of our third party developers that works with a lot of our bigger plugins and I know that they were looking into something like that. I know that I would have to go to the developers and kind of prod around and try to get some extra information on their end about it, but yeah as of right now I don't have an exact timeline for you.

Attendee: What are the chances in the future of having something available not necessarily as a main message, but as an opportunity for folks that do need a lot of the extensions to actively use? You know how when you're on JQuery you create your package? You turn something on or off, what are the chances of WooCommerce offering that as a set of extensions.

Danny: Okay, so again this is something I probably shouldn't be saying, there's some real good news on that front. One of the things that I've been working on, my role in WooThemes is kind of bouncing around; I work between support and marketing to development. And my main role is to make sure everyone is doing something that the customers need. And we hear that a lot, all the time people want just a real easy way to pick what they need, before they even get started, they can describe their business and essentially know what they want. So one thing we are looking in to and that I can guarantee is going to happen at some point hopefully by the end of the year is kind of bundles. So let's say a user was looking into starting a subscription learning site and they wanted to have it a monthly payment for access to classes. What we'd do is we would say okay these are the base plugins that you would need and here are a few that would be different options. This one would allow your users to get badges and awards and share those and this one would do this feature or this feature, so yeah there is things and there are a lot of things in planning that allow you to customize what you get at a discounted rate. And then were actually going to look, actually a lot of our plugins are transferring to free standalone plugins, so like the R team plugin, the projects plugin in, right now these are part of Woo

Dojo but these will be free plugins on the repository. So hopefully that answered your question, anyone else? Alright so now let's look and see what actually you can do. And I'll share my screen with you guys again. Okay, so what is done is I've set up a sample WooCommerce store. Actually let's just start from the basics. So it sounds like some of you have used WooCommerce before so I'm not going to worry about covering what each little area is, so here I have a few different kinds of products that spread across lots of different brands and needs so let's just say you were a local store. We could use the example of a restaurant where you could place your order ahead of time and you could pick it up or have it delivered, you could with built in software, you don't have to buy a single extra plugin, you could have all these built in options with and you could just select and add it to the cart. So that's just product variations and that's right off the bat and it took me 10 minutes to make this product. Then you can get kind of more advanced with that. So let's say you wanted to do a custom t-shirt design. You've had multiple kinds of variations from a size and then the color, and if you see here it actually tracks the stock of each individual variation, so there's only 8 of the small blues and then 3, 10, so you can check products down to individual stock if you needed to or you can just leave it like you have a certain amount of blue, a certain amount of red, things like that. And again that's all built in it doesn't require anything but base WooCommerce. So now we want to get a little bit more advanced and kind of show you how flexible it is. So if we add the product add-ons...

Attendee: I just have a quick question on the variations, what if in certain sizes you never offered certain colors of t-shirts, what if you like want a variations where you can mix your colors and your sizes and that offers all sizes and all combinations? Although as you pointed out it shows up as 0 stocks.

Danny: Sorry you were cutting out a little bit, was your question that if you can variations and select which colors go along with which sizes for example?

Attendee: Correct, like you offer red, but not in small or medium.

Danny: Right, so yeah you can do that, so which each variation you can set a different size, you can put each variation on sale at a different price, you could do almost anything you could with a regular product, so for example, some of our other plugins we have a bulk rate discount, it's called dynamic pricing, so let's say you wanted to have it so if the user buys 10 shirts, the shirts are 25% off. You can get it down to as specific as if the user buys 3 small red shirts and 4 medium blue shirts, that they get that 25% discount. So it handles each variation as a separate product in terms of what you can do with it. It just makes it all on one page in the back end and really easy to manage. So each product has its own SKU, its own image, everything like that. So then this is another example of kind of a basic variation but we're using product add-ons. And product add-ons is hands down my favorite extension, you can do so much more with WooCommerce that I wish that we could bundle it, it would just change the entire experience. So anyway let's say that you own that same restaurant and users can customize their own smoothie. First they choose the size, and then they choose what flavors they want in their smoothie.

Let's say we make an awful mix of flavors I guess, and then sure we'll add a cherry on top. So here we can see what the options would cost and the grand total and we can apply that and add to cart. So that what this would do is that when you receive the order in the back end, it will show you all the different variations that you got; it will show you any SKUS that you need, so let's say that these were all separate products, like a blueberry flavoring was its own product, it'll say you need to pull a blueberry, a lime, an orange, a peach, mix them all together, and it gives you everything you need in the back end, but this means the best part about this is that you don't need to have variations for this. So we have 6 different sizes here, and 15 or so different flavors, we can essentially have over 100 variations which are just essentially too much to control. The thing with add-ons is it still allows you to keep that fixed variation price, but also have these add-ons change the price. Okay so, again I'm just making it more and more complicated and everything. This is an example of selling contact lenses as a kit. So this one came around when one of the customers on the community forums was looking to have this as an option for their customers. So what this is, is composite products. And this is another extension, it's pretty cheap, it's great, because what it does is it allows you to allow users to pick their own bundles out of set products that you describe. So all of these sizes here are individual products, that you keep track of in the background and would manage with your stock system, but it all appears here so the user can select their power and their base curve, all like that, and they say they want 3 months, they add to cart, and it will tell you exact SKU you need to pull in the back end to do that. So it just makes it very easy for you to manage it, it allows users to display without having to get into lots of lists different, buying one eye at a time sort of deals. So the last one I'll show you demo wise is this one, and this one was in response to something again on our community forums where users wanted to sell their photography online. And they wanted to use WooCommerce. So right now there's not exactly an easy way to do that, there just isn't a good way to have a lot of takes and shots and angles, all on one page that offers different prices, so what this does is it uses the swatches and variations plugin along with add-ons and it allows you to sell your products like that. So say we did a shot of my cat lily here. You could have these thumbnails and cycle through where the user could select their favorite; you can have a full gallery where you can slide through and see each shot, and for each picture all they would have to do is say they wanted to order this one, they just want the digital download, select it, great, but if they want 2 5x7's, select that, add it to the cart and then what it does instead of taking them to the cart is it drops them back at this page where they can select the next picture that they want, and choose what options they want to add to their cart.

Attendee: Which extension is this?

Danny: This is a combination of product swatches and add-ons and yeah it took not much time to set up, it was just really the trick of it was finding out how to set it up and the cool thing about all the examples I've shown you today is that we have a video tutorial for all the demos I've showed you today walking you through how to set each one up on your site. So this photography one for example, there's a written and a video tutorial that will show you how to set this up and you can modify it to your own needs. Each time you post in that thread in the knowledge base or the community where this is found the original

author gets an email so we respond right away to you if you say, "Okay, but how would I add-on this feature or is there a way I can make this an additional fee?" You know time willing if we're not bogged down by tickets or anything like that then yeah we love to talk to you guys and hear from you guys and help you guys figure out workarounds for any limitations that the software might have. And if anything if there is a limitation where we hear a lot of people wanting a photography sort of extension then we actually go out and we start planning a photography extension. So again it's kind of hush, hush, right now but there's been a lot of talk about a photography extension somewhere down the road, so until then this is the best solution, but just again that continuous improvement where we're always trying to make something for every customer and we really enjoy working with our customers and hearing from our customers so that way we can just improve and give you guys what you need to sell to your clients, so that's why I believe WooCommerce is hands down the most flexible platform out there and it's just hands down honestly not because I work for them but because you don't have to buy things you don't need and there's so many free resources and tutorials and guides and snippets that at no point do you ever really have to buy any of these extensions, usually there's a guide that tells you how to do it yourself. So all it is, is a matter of how much time you want to invest in coding versus having someone do it for you. And yeah WooCommerce really offers that with tons of extensions out there and yeah that list of extensions keeps growing each day, but that's why I believe WooCommerce is just hands down flexible by far. So that's pretty much my speech in a nutshell, so does anyone have questions?

Attendee: I have one question; you think there might ever be a plugin that would allow the customer to type in a thing they wanted that's just the price for the number of letters they type in.

Danny: Okay so that's actually a really good question, that's actually one of the demos I skipped thinking that we might not need that so I'll just hop back to that real quick. So if I can share the screen. So back to this demo card I set up. One of the customers that we had, they printed envelopes for businesses so if they were mailing out they would order in bulk. So this is a really tough one to get around for us, because there was no way to set anything built in, so what we did with the client and it was back and forth with them and an open form thread for probably about 3-4 days, but we actually figured out a workaround for them, so each envelope we figured out the base price of that and then depending on the size and material of the envelope it would change the base price. So if they wanted a certain sort of printing on the front side such as a certain color, then they can select that and if they want a printing on the back they can select some and then they'd change their quantity. So then you can add to the cart and it would show up there and yeah they're happy with it, and I know that they've been working with it for about 4 months now and they haven't had any trouble, so yeah custom printing on a mug or something, definitely possibly, definitely possible per letter, anything like that is really possible it's just a matter of just thinking of a clever way to do it all with what tools you have. And this example actually uses only just the core WooCommerce, not just the plug-ins so you can get the same set-up for free and again there's a tutorial to walk you through it and all of that is on our knowledge base and community and yeah we regularly keep it up to date.

Attendee: Okay, thanks I think it illustrates, my question, I wanted someone to type in for instance, Bill, and Bill has 4 letters. And the price on this item would be a dollar for a letter. So it would be 4 dollars for 4 characters and 5 dollars for 5 characters.

Danny: Right, so in that situation it's still the same essential idea, only what you would need to do is have an add-on field that allows them to type out their name and you might need some custom coding for that, usually we refer people to Elto or on the forums even our developers could help, all you would really need was something to count how many letters were in that string and then you can buy a product per letter rate, so yeah that's definitely possible, well um just off the top of my head I don't know if we could do that without custom code, but it should be a quick little project that you could do.

Host: So we are pretty much out of time, thanks to Danny and we want everyone to head back downstairs to the auditorium, if they aren't already starting they're starting shortly.

Danny: Thanks guys.