

Have you heard that WordPress was insecure or maybe you are afraid that your WordPress site is vulnerable to attacks and hacks? Well, the truth is you should be afraid. Hey there, everyone Scott Winterroth aka the word mentor. In this episode let's talk a little bit about WordPress security. What does it mean to have your site to be secure? How to get it secure and um, what this means to you as a blogger or a website owner. So let's jump right in. So a couple of days ago, somebody in my WordPress Mentor Facebook group posted a question about security. And, um, it was actually kind of concerning. She seemed really concerned, which I can understand because her website, powers or business and ultimately is like the storefront of her business. But, to sort of summarize, summarize what she said, uh, she said she's in a publishing group and that, um, they were talking about the why they don't use WordPress because they have the lack of security and what was this about?

And is her website vulnerable because she does have a WordPress site. And, uh, she seemed really concerned, as I mentioned, I mean, rightfully so, it's like our business. So, um, look, WordPress is software and like any type of software is vulnerable to hackings and security breaches and everything else. Uh, from your, you know, free WordPress site up into your fortune 500 company who has a website, they're all vulnerable to hacking. Facebook gets hacked all the time. Google gets hacked all the time. You just may or may not know about it. Um, but some hacks are little more severe like, um, a data breach. Like, you know, obviously when target was breached, that was a huge issue, uh, because people's personal information was compromised. Other sort of hacks are a little smaller and sometimes it's just people looking for opportunities or opportunistic hackings to maybe like insert some links on your website so they can drive traffic to their affiliate program and make some type of money.

Right. The goal is you don't want either of them, but, um, I'm gonna sort of talk about the differences of how we're WordPress can get hacked and ultimately what you can do to prevent yourself from these sort of annoyances. Um, you know, basically WordPress is software and like I, as I mentioned, it is software that is like anything, any software is susceptible to being hacked. Basically if, and in what I'm talking about now is the WordPress.org version or the US, the the hosted versus self hosted version of WordPress. So if you're using WordPress on like a hosting provider, like a go to any that comms had ground.com bluehost or media temple, you are using the open sourced, um, cell phones diversion of WordPress. If you're using WordPress.com this doesn't really apply to you per se. Uh, although WordPress.com is potentially susceptible to being hacked, it's not what I'm talking about per se.

Uh, but basically if you're looking for a detailed overview of WordPress.com versus WordPress.org be sure to check out episode 41 and my podcasts blogyouwant.com or you go into a lot more detailed. But the good news regarding security is more than 30% of the web is in the same boat as you. 30% of the web uses WordPress, right? So, uh, to me that's actually a good indicator that the software is actually more secure than what people sometimes think it is. So when there is a big, what happens is with, because of this community is so large, when there is a security vulnerability that comes up, the WordPress community sort of rally around this vulnerability to fix it, right? And patches come out and that's why you get updates in the back end that, that you required to update where presents in the next version.

Right. And maybe a 5.0 0.1 that usually that those point releases mean that their patches or security fixes to either fix a potential issue or there to fix the user experience problem. Um, so always keep your website up to date. It's one of the number one ways to keep your site from being hacked. But, um, ultimately WordPress is a little more susceptible to being hacked because of its popularity. It's sort of like being the most popular guy or girl in school. Like you're almost always kind of pigeonholed for some type of flaw, right? Or something like that. But at the same time, um, it's also good to be popular,

popular because it opens up doors, right? So, um, we're press is really popular and because it's open source, meaning that anyone can read the code base to WordPress. I mean anyone can go see the exact architecture, how a WordPress is created, right?

Because it's open source software. It means I freely distributed now. Um, but that being said, it's really popular so it could be susceptible to more susceptible to hacking because of its popularity, but at the same time, it's also a more secure because of the amount of people who use it, if that makes any sense. Um, it's still my number one choice for the website content management system that I would use no matter what hands down. Um, you know, it really the beauty of WordPress is that it's open source. It's and it's ultimately free and wildly available for anyone to use. Um, it's, the security issue is sort of trade off. You have to understand, I mean at the end of the day, if you want to use a closed system, like for example, a platform like Facebook to post your content or you want to use a website app like a squarespace.com or even WordPress.com, those are like proprietary software systems that basically those systems are built with the idea that it's a closed system, right?

Only the people who work for that company or the people who have certain access levels hat no, the code base to that and they're the only ones that, that kind of know it. And they don't share that code publicly. Right. For security reasons basically. And also for intellectual proper grades, they, they do that as well. But um, that's all fine and dandy. But the problem is they're going to have to pass those costs down to the users, right? So on Facebook, you don't technically pay for Facebook as a user, but you do basically because without you, without users like you, they advertisers wouldn't be interested in investing in that particular platform. And Squarespace and Shopify and sort of like proprietary software as a service programs, they charge you a premium fee or they charge you some type of fee to use the program because that's how they have to pay for these team of developers, programmers, marketers and everybody to, to basically run and build these programs.

So, um, that's, that's the trade off. I mean, if you really want to sort of line the pockets of these corporations, you can use those platforms or if you want to sort of support the open web and live with an open source mindset like I like to do, then you want to use WordPress. So it's sort of really like the fact that yeah, is WordPress press more secure? Maybe, maybe not. But at the end of the day, it's a big community that supports the open web and it's sort of like a trade off that you have to decide. Um, PR for me, I went down that path and I've had, I've had websites can hat over the years it's a pain in the butt, but everything has been remedied. You know, it's one of those things where it hasn't been a huge situation, uh, per se. I've also fixed many people's websites over the years too.

Um, so at the end of the day, it's something you really have to decide. Um, you know, for me it's all about promoting the open web. So yeah, we're press may, may have a hack here and there, but the end of the day it's what keeps the web alive and it was still keep the web keeps the web from being a walled garden that you find. Obviously platforms like Facebook, although I love them, I use them every day. They're trying to create basically their own ecosystem that doesn't require like the worldwide web per se. They want everyone to stay on their platform and keep them on their platform because that's really where they make their money. That's their advertising casino, if you will. Right. But I like to be able to sell products and services and have my own voice on my website that doesn't abide by any type of corporation, if you will, except maybe the hosting company that I hosted on.

Then that, that's the type of web that I like. I like to keep an open web and information. So that's why I support open source. Now, um, I want to sort of give you some tips and some clothing closing thoughts on using WordPress and, and sort of like get, if you're going to use the self hosted version of WordPress,

then here are some things you definitely should consider as well as tried to implement on your website. Um, by educating yourself to these practices, you're going to keep your site hack free, which is the most important thing. I think that, um, a lot of people don't realize and, and the most acceptable sites getting hacked to the ones that haven't been updated. So number one, number one recommendation is to keep your site updated. Whenever you see a new version of WordPress or gives you the little, the little reminder to update, go for it.

But before you do that, be sure you back up your website. And that's probably my number two tip for keeping a site secure as you want to have a good rolling backup of your website. Now there are lots of ways you can back up your website. One is, um, through like various plugins and, and like a WordPress site backups that you can use. There's a really great plug in that I recommend called updraft plus, which you can use to backup your website until I Dropbox. Um, or some other type of like online storage system, which is definitely something to use if you have no other option but PR. But actually I prefer a server side back up. So for example, I use siteground.com is my hosting provider and they offer like a 60 day rolling back up. So, for example, if I want to roll my website back like four or five days ago, I can just go back four or five days to click restore and that's it.

I don't really have to do a lot of work. It's super simple. I mean, I paid for that service, but it's worth every penny if you ever have to restore your website for a few days ago. Um, and then obviously obviously after restore or you're going to have to basically figure out, well what causes hack and what can I sort of do to harden my website so I don't have to deal with this again in a couple of days. Right? So, um, this is a big term that if you're going to get into the WordPress space, you're going to have to learn about the word hardening, right? Me Basically meet keeping your site more secure. Um, number one thing you could do, obviously this is with any software, is used a really good username and password. Secure Password, right? Don't use admin and password as your username password. That's super easy to figure out.

Um, avoid using admin as your username. That's something I just mentioned, but I'm also look at their user roles within WordPress and make sure that that, that the people who have access to your website have the appropriate role. So for example, um, I have administrative access to the website so I have all access to all features which I need and be able to create new users. But I might have a contributor to my website that doesn't need to have that administrator role. Um, so really make sure whoever has access to your website has the right roles, but not because of what they may do. But if someone were to get access to the website with their username and password, then what would that potential hacker do? Wouldn't that username and password. So definitely something to consider. Use a reputable hosting company. That's another thing. I've been in really cheap web hosting companies and my site was hacked because of a sitewide hosting company hack.

So nothing I did, but it still had to, I still had remedy it and it's locked and took a lot of time to fix. So I'm definitely something to consider when you are looking and evaluating hosting companies. You know, cheap isn't always better. Sometimes it's worth to spend a little bit of money, especially if this is gonna be your business. Especially if this is like what your business is based on is your web presence, then this is a really important asset to you and make sure you do everything you can to protect it. Um, learn about the WordPress database, my SQL database and how you can better harder than that. This is definitely more of an advanced sort of tip, but there are ways to start to use the, to um, Redo the WordPress database so it doesn't use common variables and you can, that is another way to harden your website.

I definitely would have to create a more advanced tutorial on that, but I'd be happy to show you if you're interested in and ultimately, um, just be sure to not keep sensitive data on your website. That would be something that you would not want to share, right? Obviously, if you're collecting data from your customers, you know, you need to respect their data with everything that you can. So don't leave data on your website that if you were hacked, you would be embarrassed if someone found out or you would feel bad if someone got their data stolen, right, or their identity stolen because of your website. So be sure not to use that. Obviously payment processors like paypal and stripe, don't let you keep the type of data on the website. So use a reputable paypal payment processor like paypal or stripe to take sensitive data, especially payment information.

All right, so there are some hardening plugins you can look for. Um, I could talk all day about 50 different ones. So I really recommend just going to the word mentor community on Facebook. I know I talk kind of dirt about Facebook, but now I'm, I'm asking you to go to Facebook, but uh, so it'd be right. So basically if you're going to wordmentor.com, it's going to redirect you to a free Facebook group that you can join, which you talk about all kinds of WordPress tips and tricks on there. I'm going to post some hardening plugin recommendations. Um, but there's a, there's a whole bunch of them just to not completely tease it too much. Securi is a great WordPress premium WordPress service you can use to harden as well as fix your website if you needed, if you've been hacked and you needed to be fixed.

Also wordfence is another one that I um, I have seen over the years. I don't personally use word friends, but it's definitely another one that will help you sort of heart a new website and do some of the best practices. Like I'm protecting your htaccess file, which is getting a little geeky but, but those are definitely some things you should consider. And then finally, um, another one that if you had been hackers are really great free plugin called, uh, I think it's called got mls. I don't know. I really don't know the reasoning behind the name, but I've used it to sort of scan my website to see if there's been any um, sort of hackings and it's just a good scanner software that I use and I definitely will make sure I mentioned that in the uh, information regard regarding or related to this episode.

So that's it. If you've been hacked, first thing I want to say, don't panic. Obviously everything's fixable so don't worry about that. If you have a good backup, there's nothing really to worry about. And then obviously just spend time figuring out what's wrong. If you need help because you've been hacked, I've cleaned up many websites will feel free, feel free to reach out to me. I definitely would be happy to put you in the right direction. If not, you can hire me to fix it. So that did for this episode. Thank you so much for watching or listening depending on what platform you're on. If you have any questions, please feel free to hit me up scott@contentacademy.com and be sure to answer them either on the show or privately. And don't forget to check out our free WordPress group. It's at wordmentor.com you can go there, it redirects you to our Facebook group.

You could join and uh, we can share a, we share great WordPress users, tips and tricks kind of with the content user mindset and not so much the developer mindset. So, um, it's really ideal for people who are around the content side of things. And then finally, if you don't have a WordPress site or you don't have a cell phones to WordPress site and you're looking to get into doing the self hosted WordPress site, I have a free online course. You can take that contentacademy.com/ftu course for a first time user. So contentacademy.com/ftu course and that will redirect you to my free online course. So check it out. You have any questions? You know how to get in touch with me. Thanks. That's it for this episode. Bye for now.