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Certified Public Accountants



WordPress Cybersecurity: Essential security tips for business websites



WordPress powers more than 45% of all websites on the internet, making it a preferred platform for businesses, freelancers, and entrepreneurs. Its popularity is a testament to its flexibility, user-friendliness, and a vast array of features and plugins that cater to nearly any online endeavor. However, its widespread use also makes WordPress sites a prime target for cyberattacks.

A security breach on your WordPress site, or any site, can have far-reaching consequences. Beyond the immediate disruption to your business operations, it could harm your online reputation and reveal protected data held on your site.

Despite WordPress being a secure platform by design, the reality is that no website is completely safe from security threats. The onus is on each site owner to take proactive steps to enhance their site's security.

While the internet is fraught with potential security risks, many of these threats can be mitigated, if not entirely prevented, by a few straightforward security measures. Here are eight security measures that every WordPress user should prioritize:

1. Use strong passwords

A strong password is your first line of defense and shouldn't be overlooked. You'd be surprised how many people use compromised or ineffective passwords. Start with a unique password that includes letters, numbers, and symbols and is at least 12 characters long.

Consider using a password manager to create and securely store complex passwords. This will help ensure that you have unique passwords for each website and that they are protected.



Finally, set up two-factor authentication for an extra layer of security. With two-factor authentication, even if someone gains access to your password, they would still need a second form of verification to access your site.

2. Use hosting designed for WordPress

Your choice of web hosting plays a key role in your site's security. Opt for a hosting provider that specializes in WordPress and offers advanced security features like regular backups, firewalls, and malware scanning. A reputable host will also ensure your site runs on the latest version of PHP and automatically keep WordPress updated. Some hosts also monitor plugins for new versions and security vulnerabilities.

3. Be cautious with plugins and themes

Plugins and themes extend the functionality and design of your WordPress site but can also introduce security vulnerabilities. Only download themes and plugins from reputable sources, like those found in the official WordPress repository.

Delete any themes or plugins that your site is not using. Unused plugins can become obsolete over time, and if not maintained, they can become vulnerabilities waiting to be exploited.

Keep all themes and plugins that your site does use updated with the latest version. Developers frequently release updates to address security vulnerabilities and enhance functionality.



4. Keep WordPress Updated

In addition to updating themes and plugins, be sure to update the core WordPress software. The software is frequently updated to address security vulnerabilities. Once these patches are released, the details of the vulnerabilities they fix become public knowledge, making sites running outdated versions prime targets for hackers.

5. Use SSL encryption

Secure Sockets Layer, also known as SSL, is a technology that encrypts the data transmitted between your website and your visitors' web browsers. This encryption ensures that any information exchanged, from personal details to payment information, is shielded from cyber criminals.

Activating SSL can also improve your site's visibility in search results because search engines like Google give preference to sites using SSL. Many web browsers now alert users when they're about to access a site that lacks SSL encryption, and this warning can deter potential visitors - hurting your site's traffic and credibility.

6. Back up your website

Regular backups are your safety net in case of a security breach. They enable you to quickly restore your website with minimal data loss. Schedule automatic backups through your hosting provider or a trusted WordPress backup plugin. Ensure backups are stored in a secure, off-site location and regularly test them to confirm they can be restored successfully.



7. Use comprehensive security software

A robust firewall is your site's first line of defense. It functions by filtering out malicious traffic and protecting your site from a range of cyber threats. However, a firewall is just one type of defense. Regular malware scans are equally important, as they help detect and address malware, vulnerabilities, and other security issues that might slip past initial defenses.

Many WordPress all-in-one security solutions, such as Wordfence, Solid Suite, and Sucuri, include a firewall and malware scanner. These integrated solutions offer the convenience of managing your site's defense mechanisms through a single interface, making it easier to monitor your site's security status and respond to potential threats promptly.

8. Change your login URL

The default login URL for WordPress is your domain, followed by wp-admin or wp-login. This predictability makes it easier for attackers to launch brute-force attacks and crack user passwords. Therefore, consider changing the login URL of your website to something different, making it more difficult for hackers to find.



Final Thoughts

Security is an ongoing process that requires vigilance, timely action, and an understanding of emerging threats. As cyber threats evolve and become more sophisticated, you want to ensure your website remains protected against potential vulnerabilities.

We hope this article is a valuable resource for you and a reminder to always maintain your website's security.



About Johnson & Sheldon, PLLC

Johnson & Sheldon, PLLC is professional corporation that has established itself as one of the leading, aggressive accounting and consulting firms in the Panhandle Region of Texas. Our clients have been relying on the experience and guidance of our partners, Terry Sheldon , Richard Blankenship and Jeff Joyce for over 30 years. Located in Amarillo, Johnson & Sheldon's client base consists of small to medium size mostly privately-owned business and organizations. J&S is a member of the RSM US Alliance, the nation's fastest growing association of independent accounting firms. Through our affiliation with this network, Johnson & Sheldon, PLLC can offer the pooled expertise and resources of the RSM US Alliance, as well as other network members.



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