



How Selling WordPress
Maintenance Can Save
Your Freelance Business

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Brought to you by iThemes
Your one-stop shop for WordPress plugins,
themes & training

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About iThemes

iThemes was founded in 2008 by Cory Miller, a former newspaper journalist and public relations/communication practitioner turned freelance moonlighting web designer, turned full-time entrepreneur. Miller founded iThemes in his home, fulfilling a lifelong dream of running his own company. Since then, iThemes has grown into a full enterprise providing professional WordPress plugins, themes and training.

The feast and famine cycle is a constant struggle for the freelance WordPress developer.

But you can break that cycle by selling WordPress maintenance to your freelance clients. You get steady, reliable income and your clients get peace of mind.

Everybody wins. And it just might save your business.

What's WordPress Maintenance?

[WordPress 4.0.1](#) is available! [Please update now.](#)

Are your freelance clients seeing notices to update WordPress? As a freelance developer, you know WordPress needs to be kept up to date, but too often clients don't bother. Then you get panicked calls about hacked sites. Or some kind of oops makes a site disappear.

They want you to bring it back right now, but they never paid you to set up any kind of backup system. Or themes and plugins need to be updated but that simple click breaks something and a client needs immediate help.

We're talking about offering a monthly WordPress maintenance package to your clients. You take care of the details and your client doesn't sweat it. To you they're relatively minor issues, often automated and simple, but to your clients they're business-stopping nightmares.

What's the Benefit of Selling WordPress Maintenance?

Glad you asked. There are plenty of upsides to selling WordPress maintenance packages to your freelance clients.

No More Feast & Famine

A freelancer should be selling WordPress maintenance because it breaks you out of that feast and famine cycle. You can have steady, recurring income each month—work you can plan for and money you can count on. No more wondering how you're going to make it next month. No more accepting every project for fear of work drying up and suddenly you're pulling all-nighters like the college days.

Build Relationships

A retainer is a smart way to grow your business. Instead of building one-and-done sites for clients and never seeing them again, you can build a lasting relationship with clients. Build their site and then take care of it going forward.

Work More Efficiently

It takes a lot of work to get new business, so make the most of it by keeping those new clients for the long haul. It's better service to your customers and less marketing work for a busy freelancer like you.

Who Needs WordPress Maintenance?

Current Clients

Most of your clients would probably love the opportunity to let someone else worry about all these technical details. It's something you can offer to current clients to continue the relationship and offer them extra service.

Former Clients

A good freelance business needs repeat customers, so go back to your past clients and try selling WordPress maintenance packages to them. Be the hero as you point out problems and then take care of them.

New Clients

It's also something you can offer to entice new clients. There are plenty of small and mid-level organizations with no internal web team. They've got websites they outsource and details like security and backups are a constant worry.

Nonprofits are another area where you'll likely find organizations without any developers on staff. Many nonprofits are creating amazing content online, but they're often handcuffed by a lack of technical help. They need to keep that content safe and want to make some tweaks, but bringing in a developer sounds pricey. They probably have no idea how affordable ongoing WordPress maintenance could be.

How to Sell Ongoing WordPress Maintenance

How you position your WordPress maintenance package will depend on exactly what you're offering, but here are a few ways you can approach it:

- **Focus on Full Service:** Maintaining websites is tedious and technical so let us do it for you.
- **Start With Security:** The Internet can be a dangerous place, so let us protect your site.
- **Peace of Mind:** Staying on top of the latest updates and security warnings is a job for a professional. We can help.

There are a lot of ways to pitch this kind of a package, but focus on the basic needs and pain points. Show how you can proactively prevent problems and save them money in the long run.

What to Include in Your WordPress Maintenance Package?

You can bundle all kinds of services when you're selling WordPress maintenance. Put together a package that works. It all depends on what you're comfortable with and what you think your clients need.

Here are some potential services you could include:

- **Updates:** WordPress usually rolls out major updates twice a year, though minor updates roll out as needed. There are also updates for themes and plugins, which are much less predictable.
- **Backups:** Sites should have a backup plan that fits with their needs. A site with lots of content updates might want a database backup once a day at a minimum and a full backup weekly. Sites with fewer updates might not need such frequent backups, but they should still have regularly scheduled, full-site backups that are stored off-site.
- **Security:** Monitoring security and ensuring full recovery is a big task. You could offer basic security, monitoring, updates and more. Your clients will pay you to be proactive and keep their sites safe, but if anything happens you'll likely need to step in and provide the fixes as well.

- **Tracking & Reporting:** Pulling up stats isn't very difficult, but it's the kind of thing a lot of website owners don't have time for and can't always make sense of. Offering a simple report that summarizes numbers and includes a few trends or other basics (sales numbers, increases in email or social media subscribers) could be very helpful.
- **Hosting & Domain Name:** Especially for new clients you can offer the whole package and include their domain registration and hosting as well. Many hosts offer reseller accounts and rolling this into a site's maintenance and updates means you've got the entire site covered.
- **Other Services:** You might sweeten your retainer by adding specific services offered in limited hourly chunks. For example, you might offer 10 hours of tech tweaks per month. It could be coding, design, writing, SEO improvements or even training or support.

What's the Cost?

Once you figure out what you're going to offer for ongoing WordPress maintenance, then you need to sort out how much to charge. This will depend on your expenses, so be sure to add up all your costs:

- **Plugins:** You'll want some plugins to help with monitoring and maintenance, including [BackupBuddy](#) and our security plugin, [iThemes Security](#). You can get the [Plugins Suite](#), an unlimited developer license that includes all our iThemes plugins, for \$247 per year.
- **Tools:** If you're managing a lot of sites you'll want to make it easy on yourself. [iThemes Sync](#) will let you manage updates for multiple WordPress sites in one simple dashboard. You can manage 10 sites for free or add more starting at 25 sites for \$50 per year.
- **Storage:** Off-site backup is a must and it's easy with BackupBuddy. But you'll need storage space. [BackupBuddy Stash](#) offers 1 GB for free with BackupBuddy, but you can upgrade to 5 GB or more starting at \$35 per year. You could also look into other options including Amazon S3 or Dropbox.
- **Hosting:** Look at your reseller hosting account to figure out what hosting and domains will cost and what you can charge. Some setups will let you mark up the price while others will have a discounted rate. You'll need to think through how best to work that into the package price. We recommend [Site5](#) for hosting and they encourage [reseller hosting](#).

- **Time:** Don't forget to factor in your time. While a lot of these maintenance tasks are easy and some are even automated, you still have some work to do and it's going to take some time. At the very least you need to set things up and keep an eye on them.

Make sure you're looking at the costs for all the services you include in your package. It should be a good deal for your clients because you're taking care of their needs and the steady work should entitle them to a discount. But be careful not to sell yourself short. You're providing a hugely valuable service and taking a major headache off your clients' plates.

Tip: Create a Workflow

As you think about how much time you're going to invest for each site, you should list out each required step and put together a workflow. Find ways to minimize time and maximize your efficiency.

Freelance Maintenance Providers

Sometimes it helps to see exactly what we're talking about. And it never hurts to check out the competition. So check out these providers selling WordPress maintenance to see how you can position yourself:

- [The WP Butler](#)
- [WP Maintainer](#)
- [WP Site Care](#)
- [The WP Valet](#)
- [EmbraceWP](#)
- [Maintainn](#)
- [WP Curve](#)
- [Codeable](#) (this one is more of a market for small coding jobs)

Once you put your maintenance package together it's time to sell it. Here are a few ways you can market your new retainer service:

- **Former Clients:** Check in with former clients and see how they're doing. Ask if their site is up to date and if they need any improvements. Mention your backup and security services.
- **Current Clients:** Entice your current clients to try out your service by offering a free month or two.
- **Security Audit:** Offer to perform a free security audit on a site and point out their vulnerabilities. This can be scary, so be careful not to come across like you're threatening or strong-arming a potential client.
- **Replacement Cost Calculator:** Create a tool to calculate the replacement cost of a site. It could include all content, technical components and designed pieces—basically what it would cost to replace their site in order to show the importance of protecting it. We created a simple calculator to show the cost of replacing content.
- **Create Content:** Offer something shareable (free ebook, blog post, email, etc.) that talks about the importance of security, backup and timely updates. Make the case for ongoing WordPress maintenance and then present your solution.
- **WordPress Updates:** Touch base with new and old clients when a new WordPress update comes out and ask if they're taking care of their own updates or if they need some help to stay current.

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Get to Work

Now it's time to put your plan to work. Here's a list of action items to get you started creating your freelance WordPress maintenance package:

- **Get all the necessary tools.** Don't forget to look into reseller hosting—it might be more time intensive to set up.
- **Put together your initial packages.** You'll want to decide on your ideal pricing and maybe even offer three levels of service.
- **Create a page on your site to sell these services.** You might not go public with this right away, but you'll want to start working on how you'll sell this service.
- **Start beta testing.** Contact one of your clients and offer them a free or reduced price beta test.

Selling WordPress maintenance is one of the best ways to create steady, dependable income. It will carry you through the famine days of freelancing and isn't so time intensive that you'll drown during the feast days of freelancing. It just might save your business.

BackupBuddy, BackupBuddy Stash and iThemes Sync Can Help

Many of our iThemes products are ideal for freelancers selling WordPress maintenance packages. It's why we created several of them:

- [BackupBuddy](#)
- [BackupBuddy Stash](#)
- [iThemes Sync](#)
- [iThemes Security](#)

Don't forget you can purchase the unlimited license [Plugin Suite](#) and get access to all iThemes plugins for one low price.



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iThemes is your go-to partner
in growing your WordPress business



BackupBuddy

Backup, restore and
move WordPress



iThemes Sync

Manage all your
WordPress sites from
one dashboard



iThemes Exchange

Simple ecommerce
for WordPress



iThemes Security

Protect and Secure
WordPress

Plus 200+ themes and 600+ hours
of web design training.

learn more at ithemes.com