Building Your Own WordPress Website vs. Hiring A Consultant

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What is Wordpress?

WordPress is a free and open-source content management system (CMS) based on PHP and MySQL. Here's a brief overview:

- **History and Popularity**: WordPress was released on May 27, 2003, by founders Matt Mullenweg and Mike Little. It has since become the most widely used CMS on the internet, powering over 30% of all websites as of my last update in January 2022.

- **Themes**: WordPress uses themes to dictate the appearance and display of a website. There are thousands of free and premium themes available, allowing users to customize the look and feel of their sites.

- **Plugins**: WordPress has a robust plugin architecture. Plugins are bits of software that can be uploaded to extend and expand the functionality of a WordPress site. This modularity means that users can add features like contact forms, SEO tools, e-commerce capabilities, and more.

- **Ease of Use**: One of the primary reasons for WordPress's widespread adoption is its ease of use. Users can create and edit content without any knowledge of coding. Its interface is user-friendly, making it easy for beginners to get started.

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What is Wordpress?

- **Open Source**: Being open-source means that WordPress's source code is freely available for anyone to study, modify, and distribute. This openness has fostered a large and active community of developers, designers, and users who contribute to its growth and improvement.

- **Installation**: Many web hosting services offer one-click installations of WordPress, making it easy to get started. After installation, users can log into the backend (or the "dashboard") of their website to start creating content.

- **Types of Websites**: Originally developed as a blogging tool, WordPress has evolved to support a wide range of website types, from blogs to e-commerce sites, portfolios, news outlets, and more.

- **Security and Maintenance**: Like all software, WordPress requires regular updates to address security vulnerabilities and improve functionality. The community behind WordPress actively maintains it, releasing updates that users can apply to their sites.

- **Gutenberg Editor**: In 2018, WordPress introduced a new editing experience called the Gutenberg editor, which employs blocks to build and design pages and posts. This modernized the way users create content on their WordPress sites.

- **Economy**: Due to its popularity, an entire economy has sprung up around WordPress, including theme and plugin developers, specialized hosting services, professional consultants, and more.

In summary, WordPress is a versatile and adaptable platform suitable for a vast range of website needs. Whether you're a blogger, business owner, or developer, there's a good chance WordPress can serve your online needs.

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Wordpress.com vs Self-Hosted Wordpress

Hosting:

- **WordPress.com**: Your website is hosted on WordPress.com's servers. You don't need separate web hosting.
- **Self-hosted WordPress (WordPress.org)**: You need to purchase your own web hosting and install the WordPress software there.

Cost:

- **WordPress.com**: Has a free plan with limitations. Paid plans are available with more features.
- **Self-hosted WordPress**: The software is free, but you have to pay for web hosting and any premium themes or plugins you choose.

Customization & Flexibility:

- **WordPress.com**: Limited to the themes and plugins provided by WordPress.com. Custom plugins and themes are only allowed on the Business plan or higher.
- **Self-hosted WordPress**: Complete freedom to use any theme or plugin and to customize the site's code.

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Wordpress.com vs Self-Hosted Wordpress

Maintenance & Updates:

- **WordPress.com**: Automatic updates and backups are handled by WordPress.com.
- **Self-hosted WordPress**: You're responsible for updates, backups, and general site maintenance.

Monetization:

- **WordPress.com**: Restrictions on monetization, especially on the free plan. WordPress.com may display their ads on your free site.
- **Self-hosted WordPress**: Full freedom to monetize as you see fit, with no forced ads.

Domain:

- **WordPress.com**: The free plan gives you a subdomain (e.g., yoursite.wordpress.com). Custom domains are available on paid plans.
- **Self-hosted WordPress**: You can use any custom domain you purchase.

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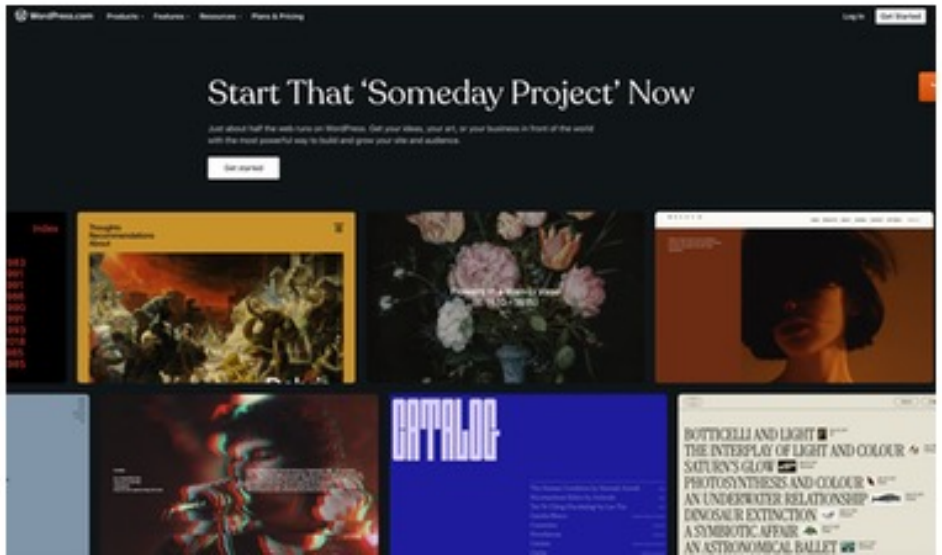
Wordpress.com vs Self-Hosted Wordpress

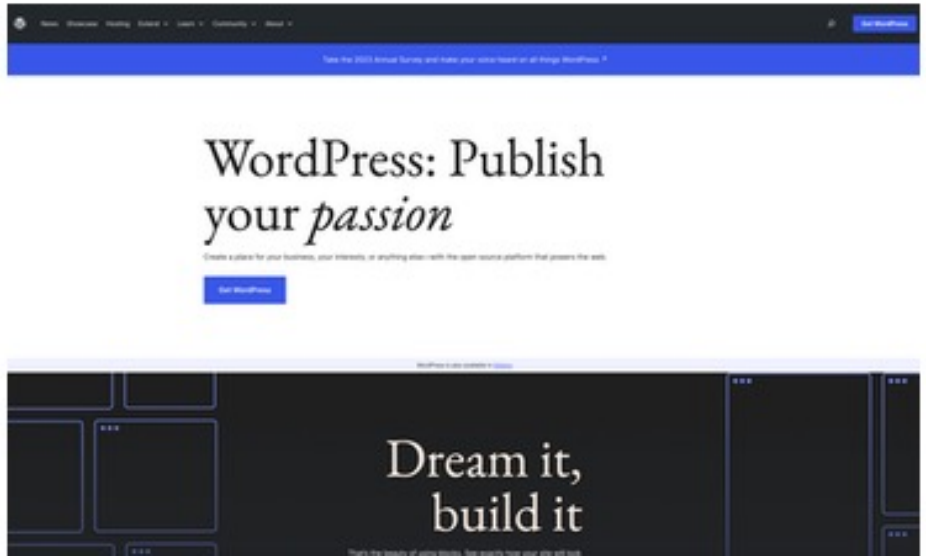
Branding:

- **WordPress.com**: The free plan includes WordPress.com branding on your site.
- **Self-hosted WordPress**: No imposed branding. Your site is entirely your own.

In essence, **WordPress.com** is a more hands-off, hosted solution with limitations, while **self-hosted WordPress** offers complete flexibility and control but requires more hands-on management.

Wordpress.com vs Wordpress.org





Difference between a Web Host & A Web Site

Web Host:

- **Definition**: A web host is a service provider that offers the technology and server space required for websites to be viewed on the internet. They maintain servers where website files are stored and ensure that these files are accessible to internet users when they type in a website URL or click on a link.
- **Functionality**: Web hosts provide various services, including website storage, domain name registration, email hosting, and sometimes additional services like website builders or content management systems.
- **Types**: There are different types of web hosting solutions, such as shared hosting, dedicated hosting, VPS hosting, cloud hosting, and more, catering to different website needs and sizes.

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Difference between a Web Host & A Web Site

Website:

- **Definition**: A website is a collection of interconnected web pages, images, videos, and other digital assets that are addressed relative to a common Uniform Resource Locator (URL), usually consisting of only the domain name, or the IP address, and the root path ('/') in an Internet browser's address bar.
- **Functionality**: Websites serve various purposes, from providing information, facilitating online shopping (e-commerce), social networking, entertainment, or offering specialized services like online banking, educational platforms, etc.
- **Creation**: Websites can be created using coding languages like HTML, CSS, and JavaScript or with content management systems (CMS) like WordPress, Joomla, or Drupal. Once created, a website's files and data need to be uploaded to a servers provided by a web host so they can be accessed online.

In simple terms, think of a **web host** as a landlord renting out space (on servers) and the **website** as the tenant's furniture and belongings that fill that space. The web host provides the infrastructure for the website to live and operate, while the website itself is the actual content and functionality that visitors interact with.

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Benefits of Themes in Wordpress

- **Professional Design**: Themes provide a professional and aesthetic design out of the box, which ensures that even those without design skills can have a polished-looking site.

- **Customizability**: While themes come with a predefined design, many offer extensive customization options. Users can change colors, fonts, layouts, and other design elements to match their brand or personal preference.

- **Responsive Design**: Most modern WordPress themes are responsive, meaning they automatically adjust and look good on various devices, including desktops, tablets, and mobile phones.

- **Functionality**: Some themes come with built-in features tailored for specific types of websites, such as e-commerce functionalities for online stores or portfolio layouts for artists.

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Benefits of Themes in Wordpress

- **Time and Cost Savings**: Creating a website design from scratch can be time-consuming and expensive. Themes provide a quick and often affordable way to establish an online presence.

- **SEO Benefits**: Many well-coded WordPress themes are optimized for search engines out of the box, helping with the visibility of the site on platforms like Google.

- **Regular Updates**: Premium themes often come with support and updates, ensuring compatibility with the latest WordPress versions and web standards.

- **Consistency**: Themes ensure a consistent look and feel across all pages of the website, enhancing user experience.

- **Variety**: Given the vast number of WordPress themes available, users have a wide array of choices to pick a design that best suits their needs, whether it's for blogging, business, e-commerce, or any other niche.

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Benefits of Themes in Wordpress

- **Plug-and-play**: With themes, users can easily switch the design of their website without altering the underlying content, making design revamps a breeze.

- **Safety and Security**: Reputable theme developers often follow best coding practices and ensure that their themes don't have vulnerabilities that can be exploited by hackers.

In essence, themes in WordPress provide an easy and efficient way for users to get a visually appealing and functional website up and running without needing extensive web design or coding knowledge.

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Page Builders in Wordpress

Elementor:

- One of the most popular drag-and-drop page builders.
- Offers a free version with basic features and a pro version with advanced capabilities.

WPBakery Page Builder (formerly known as Visual Composer):

- A comprehensive drag-and-drop editor with both frontend and backend editing capabilities.
- Comes bundled with many premium themes on platforms like ThemeForest.

Beaver Builder:

- User-friendly with a robust set of modules.
- Provides a live drag-and-drop interface.

Divi Builder (by Elegant Themes):

- Known for its versatility and rich feature set.
- It's the core builder for the Divi theme but can be used with other themes as well.

Thrive Architect (by Thrive Themes):

- Focuses on conversion-optimized elements, making it popular for marketers and business websites.

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Page Builders in Wordpress

Brizy:

- Relatively newer but gaining popularity due to its intuitive interface and modern design options.

Oxygen:

- Offers deeper website design capabilities and integrates well with Advanced Custom Fields (ACF) and Toolset.

SiteOrigin Page Builder:

- A free, simple-to-use page builder with a grid-based system.
- Has a good set of widgets and integrates well with its SiteOrigin Widgets Bundle.

Gutenberg:

- Not a traditional page builder but worth mentioning. It's the default WordPress editor introduced in WordPress 5.0.
- Uses a block-based system for adding and customizing content. Several plugins have been developed to extend Gutenberg's capabilities.

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My Suggestions for Page Builders

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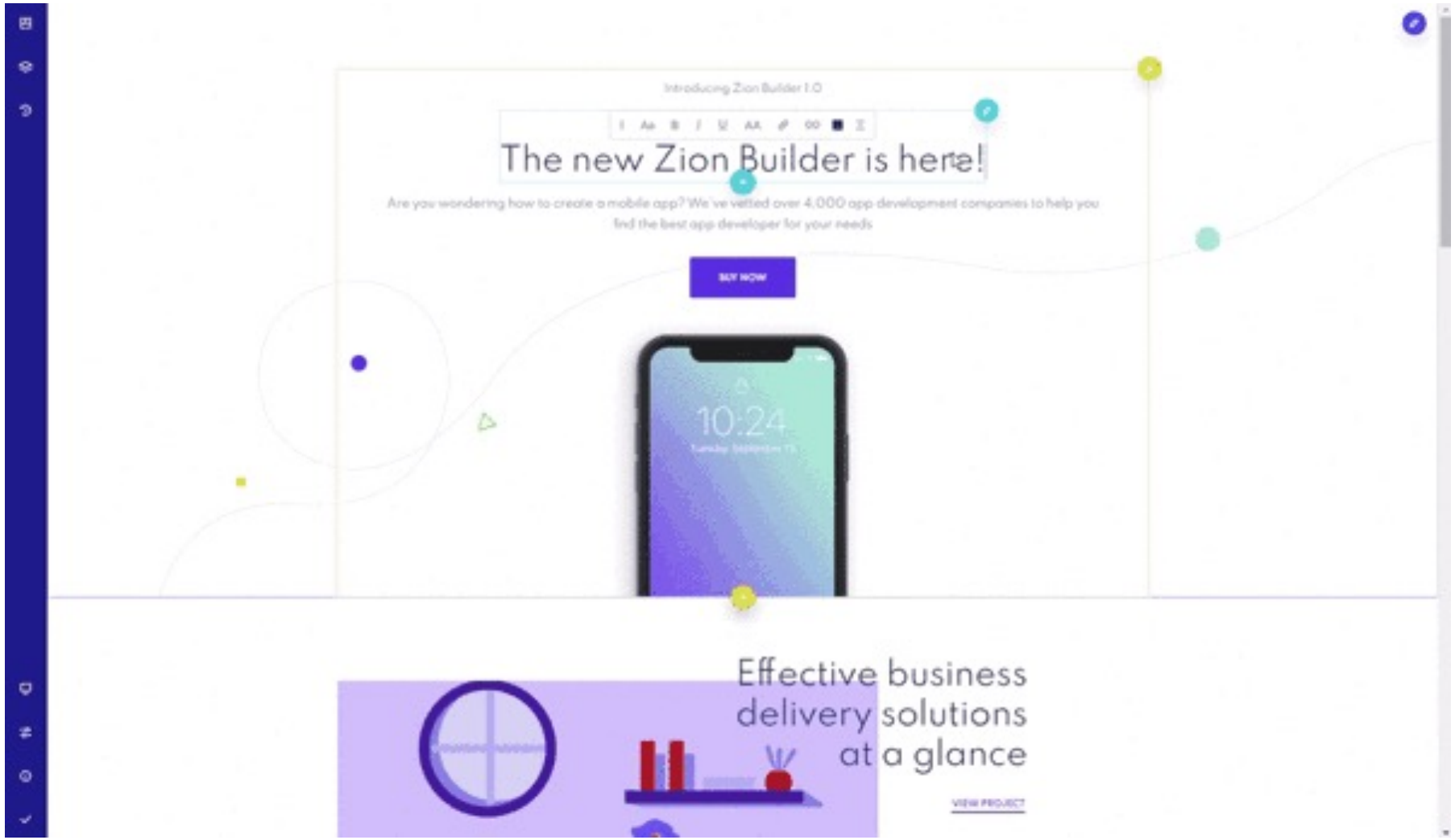
Design/Manage/Maintain Your WP Website



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Design/Manage/Maintain Your WP Website

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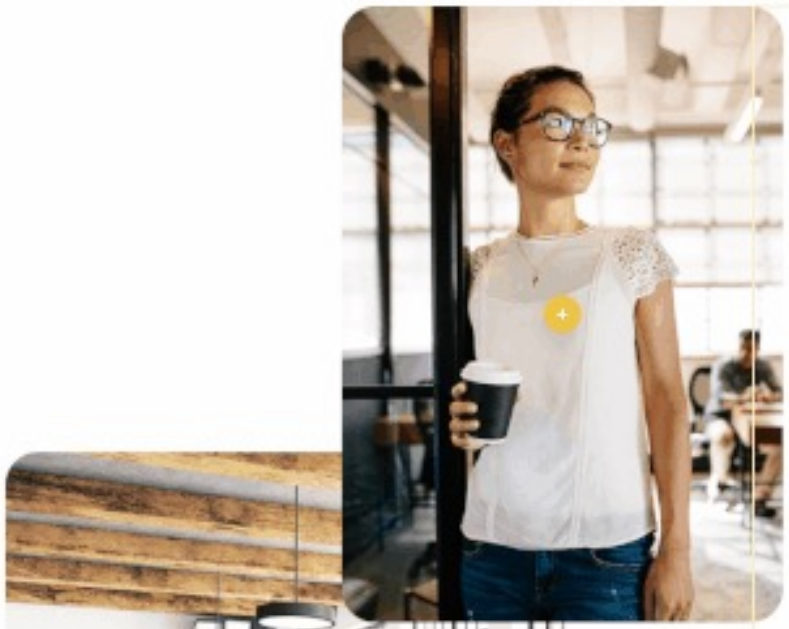

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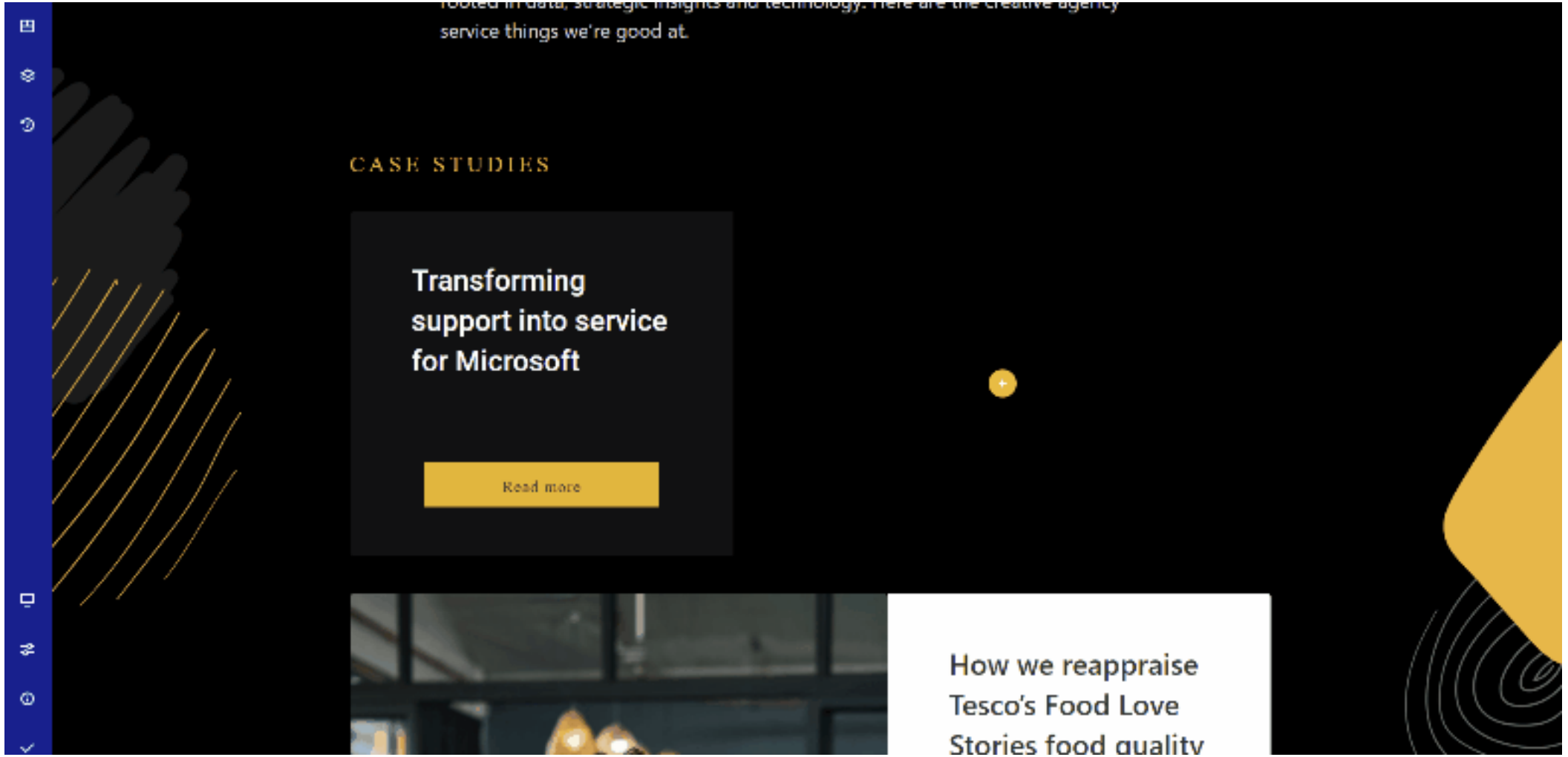

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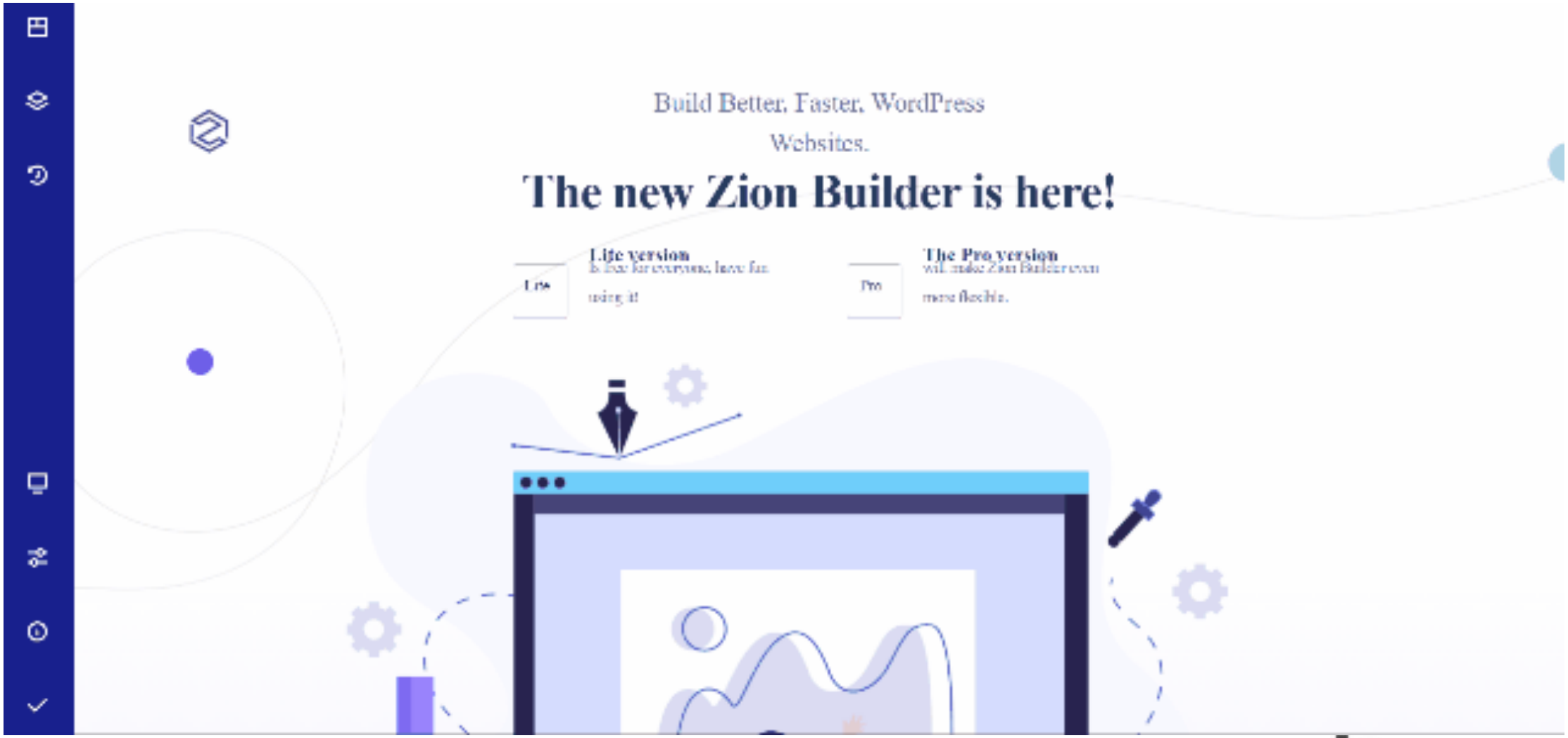

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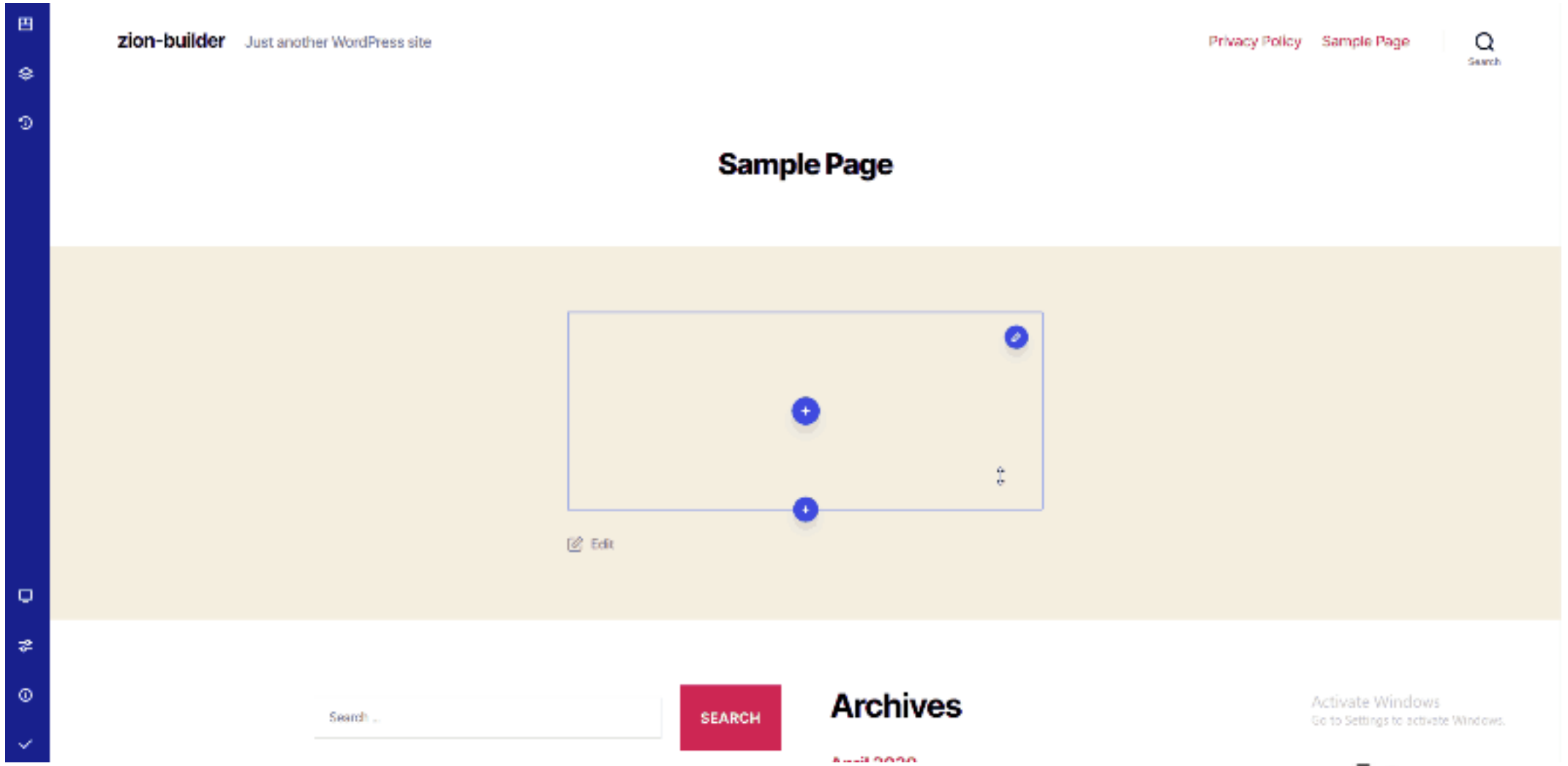

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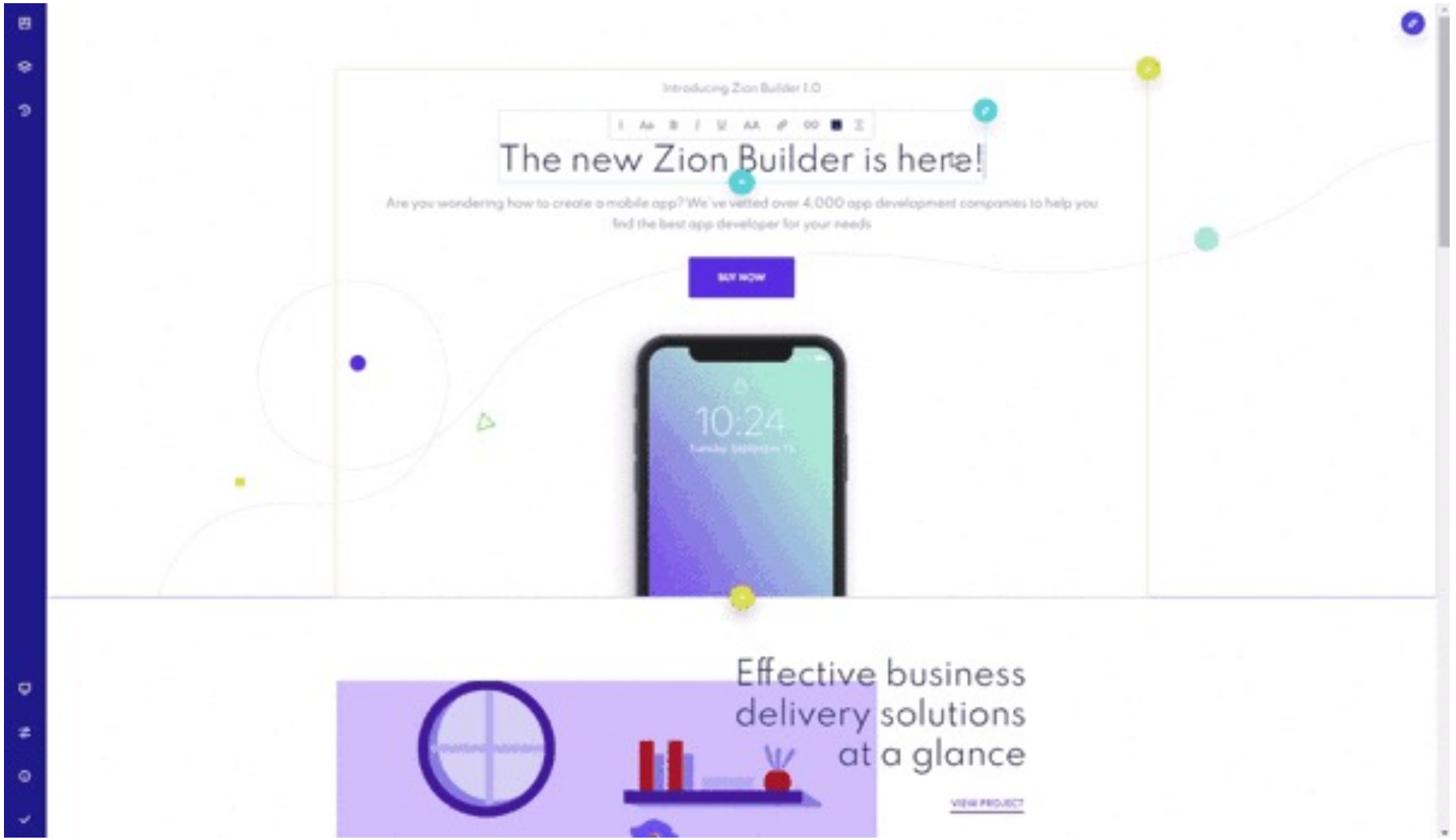

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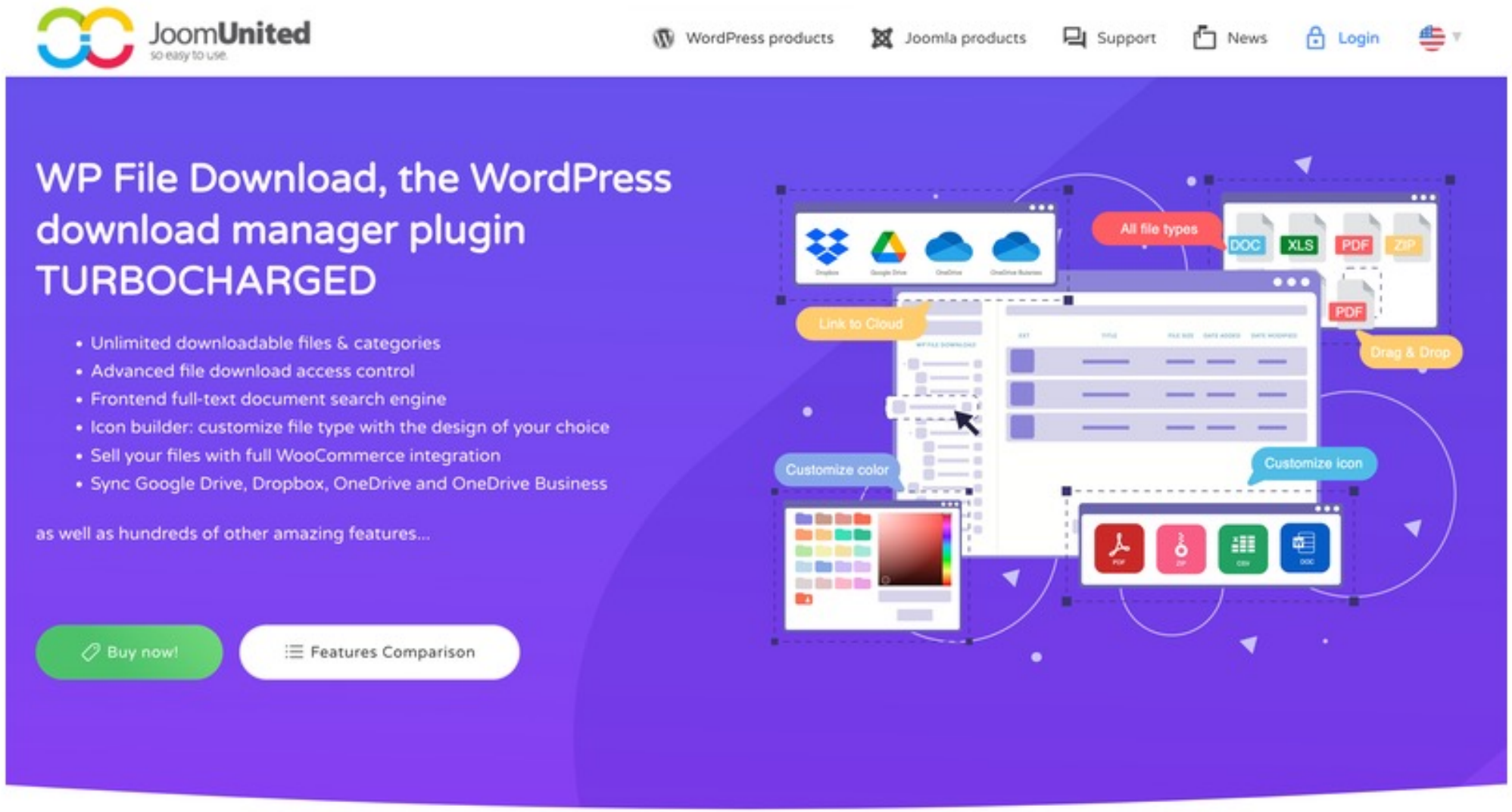
Uploading Documents to WP Website



Do's & Don't When Creating A Website Or Hiring a Consultant/Designer

Do's

. **Define Your Goals**: Before starting, be clear about what you want to achieve with your website (e.g., increase sales, share a portfolio, provide information).

. **Research**: Look into competitors' sites or other sites in your niche to understand industry standards and derive inspiration.

. **Choose a Responsive Design**: Ensure the website looks and functions well on all devices, especially mobile devices.

. **Prioritize User Experience (UX)**: Make navigation intuitive, and ensure pages load quickly.

. **Keep SEO in Mind**: Structure your site in an SEO-friendly manner. Use relevant keywords, optimize images, and ensure clean coding.

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Do's & Don't When Creating A Website Or Hiring a Consultant/Designer

Do's

. **Regularly Update Content**: Fresh and relevant content can help improve your site's SEO and engagement levels.

. **Backup Your Website**: Regularly back up your site to prevent data loss.

. **Prioritize Security**: Use trusted plugins and themes, keep them updated, and consider security plugins and SSL certificates.

. **Get Feedback**: Before fully launching, get feedback from friends, colleagues, or potential users to understand areas of improvement.

. **Have a Clear Contract**: If hiring a consultant/designer, ensure all terms, responsibilities, deliverables, and payment details are clear and agreed upon in writing.

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Do's & Don't When Creating A Website Or Hiring a Consultant/Designer

Don'ts

. **Ignore Maintenance**: Websites need regular updates and maintenance to ensure smooth functioning and security.

. **Overcomplicate Design**: A cluttered design can confuse visitors. Keep it simple and intuitive.

. **Underestimate Mobile Users**: With increasing mobile internet usage, don't neglect mobile optimization.

. **Forget About Analytics**: Not integrating tools like Google Analytics means missing out on insights about your visitors and website performance.

. **Overload with Plugins**: If using a CMS like WordPress, don't bog down your site with too many plugins; it can affect speed and security.

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Do's & Don't When Creating A Website Or Hiring a Consultant/Designer

Don'ts

- **Choose a Designer Based Solely on Price**: The cheapest option might not always be the best. Look for experience, reviews, and past work.
- **Use Auto-play Media**: Videos or music that play automatically can be annoying to users and slow down page loading times.
- **Ignore CTAs (Call-to-Actions)**: If you want users to take specific actions (like signing up or buying), make sure CTAs are clear and compelling.
- **Forget About Social Media Integration**: If relevant to your audience, integrate social media buttons or feeds.
- **Avoid Communication**: If working with a designer, maintain open communication. Regular check-ins can ensure the project stays on track.

Creating a website is a blend of technical prowess, design acumen, and strategic thinking. Whether DIY-ing or hiring a professional, it's essential to approach the process methodically and informed.

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ADA Compliance

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires certain businesses and organizations to ensure that their digital platforms, including websites, are accessible to individuals with disabilities. While the ADA does not provide specific guidelines for website accessibility, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are widely recognized as the standard.

Here are some basics of ADA compliance for WordPress websites:

- **Website Navigation**: Ensure your website can be easily navigated using only a keyboard. This is essential for users who cannot use a mouse or touchpad.
- **Alt Text for Images**: Every image on your website should have descriptive "alt" text, allowing screen readers to describe the image to visually impaired users.
- **Text Contrast**: There should be sufficient contrast between text and its background color to ensure readability for users with visual impairments.
- **Resizable Text**: Text should be resizable (up to 200% without loss of content or functionality) without requiring special software.
- **Avoid Automatic Media Play**: Audio and video should not play automatically, which can be disorienting for some users.

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ADA Compliance

- **Provide Transcripts & Captions**: For multimedia (video and audio), provide transcripts and captions to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing users.
- **Avoid Flash**: Flash can pose accessibility and compatibility issues, so it's best avoided. Use more modern, accessible technologies instead.
- **Forms**: All forms should be accessible, with clear labels for each field. Error messages should be descriptive to help users understand and correct errors.
- **Clear Layout & Structure**: Use headings correctly to structure your content, making it easier for screen readers to interpret the page's content.
- **Consistent Navigation**: Ensure that navigation is consistent across all pages of your website.
- **Accessible Plugins and Themes**: When choosing plugins and themes for your WordPress website, prioritize those designed with accessibility in mind.

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ADA Compliance

- **Use ARIA Landmarks**: Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA) landmarks can help screen readers understand the layout of a page and navigate its sections.

- **Regular Testing**: Regularly test your website's accessibility. Automated tools can help, but manual testing, including by users with disabilities, can offer more comprehensive insights.

- **Stay Updated**: Web accessibility guidelines and standards evolve. Stay updated with the latest versions of the WCAG and other relevant guidelines.

- **Accessibility Statement**: Consider including an accessibility statement on your website, demonstrating your commitment to accessibility and providing contact information for accessibility-related queries or feedback.

For WordPress websites, there are plugins available, like WP Accessibility and Accessible Poetry, that can assist in making your site more ADA compliant. However, while plugins can be helpful, they are not a complete solution. It's crucial to adopt a holistic approach to website accessibility, which may involve education, ongoing efforts, and regular audits.

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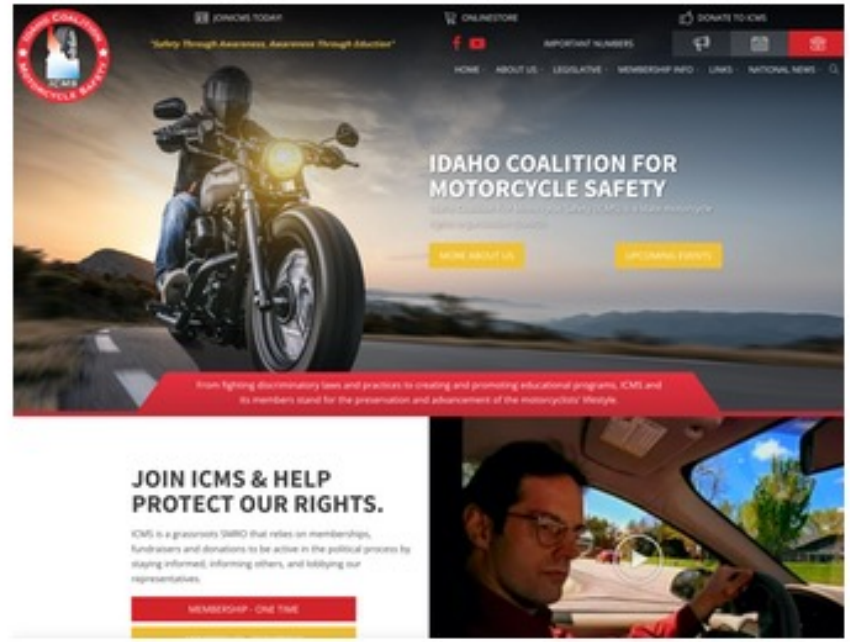
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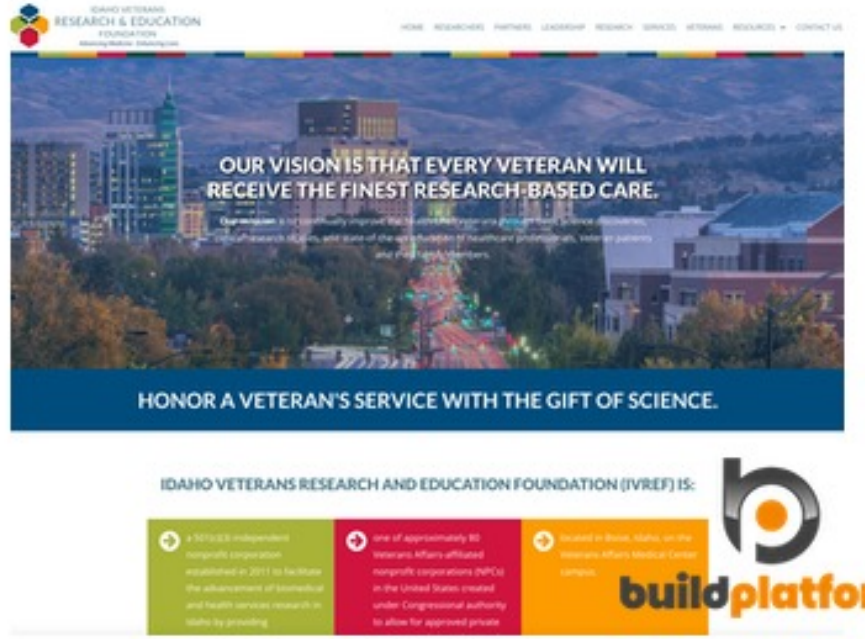
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