How to Make Money with WordPress

GETTING STARTED WITH WEB DESIGN SERVICES + RECURRING REVENUE
Most freelance web designers see their job as building new or redesigning existing websites for clients. But what happens after a site goes live? Is your work done? Most freelancers know this is rarely the case.

Your current business model may just include hourly or project-based work, but you need income that’s steady and reliable. That’s why recurring revenue should be the foundation of your freelance business.

By offering monthly services to your clients, you can **provide added value to your role as a web developer** and, ultimately, **create steady, reliable income**.

That’s where iThemes can help. We have the lineup of tools you need to provide ongoing services for your clients.

In this guide, we’ll show you how to:

- **Create, price and sell monthly services** so you can start building your business with recurring revenue.

- **Educate clients** on the importance of WordPress backups, security & maintenance and how you can help.
What is Recurring Revenue?

You may have heard of residual income, “mailbox money,” passive earnings, retainer fees or perpetual contracts.

Whatever you call it, Recurring Revenue is the foundation of any successful web development business.

3 Common Freelancer Challenges

As you might already know, most freelancers face 3 common challenges:

- Inconsistent income
- Time management
- Finding new clients

With Recurring Revenue ...

- You have more consistent income
- You get more predictable work. Spend time working instead of selling.
- You can maintain relationships for additional work and growing a network of referrals.
Recurring Revenue: A Wide Variety of Service Offerings

There are lots of different services you can provide to clients to build recurring revenue, such as:

- WordPress Backups
- WordPress Security
- WordPress Maintenance
- Hosting
- SEO
- Email Marketing
- Social Media
- Content Creation
- Copywriting
- Training

WordPress: The Perfect Platform

WordPress is the perfect platform for building recurring revenue. WordPress is open source, and the open source business model is based on services.

Think of it this way: WordPress is free, but you're probably already paying for “add-ons” from other providers, such as hosting or premium themes or plugins.

iThemes: The Perfect Partner

iThemes is the perfect partner as you build your recurring revenue services. Our tools were designed specifically with freelancers in mind.

- BackupBuddy
- iThemes Security
- iThemes Sync
- BackupBuddy Stash
A Basic Freelancer’s Annual Overview

Let’s look at some numbers. Say you work with two clients a month, and the average website project earns $1,000. That equals $24,000 each year.

Ask yourself these questions:

• How much work does it require to find and acquire 24 new clients every year? Are you currently meeting your new client goals? Are you paid for the time you spend hunting for new clients?
• Have you ever had a prior client come back to you and see their site has been hacked or there are problems with the site? How much time does it take you to fix those issues (even if you charge for the time?)
• Is it time for a change to your current business model?

Freelancing Without a Safety Net

Even if you made six figures last year, **every January you start at zero again.** Unless you’ve built some type of structure into your business to provide recurring income, you’re simply freelancing without a safety net.

Is one dollar as valuable as another?

The more predictable a dollar is, the more valuable it becomes. **Less Risk = Less Stress.**
The ideal income distribution for a freelance business should look something like this pyramid:

- **Sequential Revenue**: Services that you can sell to your clients beyond WordPress backups, security and maintenance (training, email marketing, SEO, marketing, social media, etc.)

- **Recurring Revenue**: Monthly services that are foundational to running a healthy website (backups, security & updates)

- **Repeat Customers**: These are customers that will likely come back for a website redesign or new projects.
The Future-Focused Freelancer: A Challenge

Let’s imagine you decide to make a mindset change about your business and set a one-year goal window to put your recurring revenue goals in motion.

Don’t change the pursuit of two new clients each month, but you will understand that one year from now, you will be only chasing one new client a month.

Recurring Revenue: Breaking Down the Numbers

If, during the first year, only 30% of your clients become Recurring Revenue clients, you are looking at seven clients by the end of the first year. If your “residual income” costs are $150/month, by the end of the first year, you are already making $1,050 from the system.

$1050 > $1000

By the end of the first year, when you drop your “two new clients a month” requirement to just one new client a month, you have already replaced any income you would have lost. And freed up half your development time.
A 20% Pay Raise? Yep!

What if you were offered a job with a 20% pay raise every year?

If, each year, you add 4 new clients to your recurring revenue system (after currently making $24K a year), you could be looking at this pay raise:

- Year 2: $1650/month + $1K = $31,800/year
- Year 3: $2250/month + $1K = $39,000/year
- Year 4: $2850/month + $1K = $46,000/year
- Year 5: $3450/month + $1K = $53,400/year

Recurring Revenue:

If you are limiting yourself to one client per month, it’s more likely your value will go up and now that single client per month is bringing in projects that are $1500, $2000, $3000+.

And so with your time becoming more valuable ... five years from now = over $100K a year.
Will Clients Really Pay for Ongoing Fees?

We hear this a lot: “But people won’t pay for ongoing fees.” We thought it would be good to address it right here with a few questions.

- Do they have a cell phone contract? ($100 - $200/month)
- Do they carry business insurance, car insurance, life insurance and health insurance? ($75 - $500+ month)
- Do they pay for hosting? Have they ever contacted you about an issue with their website?

Getting Started with Recurring Revenue: 3 Basic Questions

- What services do my customers need?
- What packages can I create to meet those needs?
- What resources do I need to perform those services?

Creating Your Recurring Revenue Packages

- Identify a need.
- Assemble the resources.
- Create a system.
- Package it.
- Sell it.
Pricing

Don’t try to compete on price. High volume, low-cost services are not your competition.

Consider your time and cost. Estimate the time you’ll spend, add in the cost of your tools, and add a healthy profit.

A Sample Pricing Structure

In this example pricing structure, 3 different pricing tiers are offered.

• For $150/month, clients get hosting, backups, updates and security.

• The smallest tier ($399/year for hosting) is designed to be a lower entry-point but with more upfront cost.

• Most customers will gravitate to the middle tier, so make sure to provide good value at this level.
Selling Your Services

If you’re not selling, you have a hobby, not a business.

3 Things Selling Doesn’t Have to Be

• Selling doesn’t have to be manipulative.
• Selling doesn’t have to be annoying.
• Selling doesn’t have to be boring

3 Things Selling Can Be

• Selling can be friendly.
• Selling can be helpful.
• Selling can be friendly.

Getting Over the Fear Factor

Don’t be afraid to sell your services. Be passionate about it! Why do you offer this service? Because your clients need it. Do you believe it? Tell them why.

Remember: Selling is a skill. It can be learned and the more you do it, the better you get at it.

Consider “ Outsourcing” Your Sales Force

• Find naturally good salespeople who sell compatible products to your target market.
• Give them a percentage of the sale when they refer a client.
Recurring Revenue: The Key to Success is Educating Clients

Helping your clients understand the importance of WordPress backups, security and maintenance is key to successfully implementing recurring revenue in your business.

Your job is to help them understand the risks and provide an easy solution. Inform them on what you do and why it’s important.

Education usually begins at the initial consultation. Explain how WordPress works and the need for backups, security and maintenance.

Examples of what you can say:

- “We can teach you to do it, or we offer plans that include these services.”
- “Is this something that you or an employee will be certain to do regularly?”
- “How often do you delay or ignore updates for your computer?”

Your clients need your services whether they realize it or not. Your job is to help them understand the risks and provide an easy solution.
Ideas for Educating Clients

• Go over your monthly services during the initial consultation. Inform clients of post-launch responsibilities for backups, updates and security.

• Offer first month of services at a discounted rate when bundled with a site redesign or launch.

• Create an informative sales page for each of your services. Include buy buttons on your sales pages and using a plugin like iThemes Exchange’s Recurring Payments Add-on to allow customers to enroll in automatic, monthly billing.

• Check in one-month post launch if they have not yet signed up. Include stats about the current updates needed for their website, days since last backup, etc.

• Plan quarterly checkups with clients. Listen to their needs and be ready with additional services.

• Set up periodic email marketing messaging to clients with your service offerings.
Educating Your Clients: The Problem with WordPress Backups

The truth is: WordPress doesn’t do backups for you. So, it’s on you, the website owner, to make sure your site is backed up safely and reliably. The server that runs your site is just like your computer’s hard drive—if it crashes without a backup, your files will be unrecoverable and lost forever.

Backups need to happen frequently to capture the latest version of your site. Intervals between backups depend on how often you make changes and add new content to your site, and should run frequently enough to minimize any data loss.

Backups made through hosts are frequently unreliable and may be difficult to access. Many hosts offer backup features with your hosting plan, but you may not have control over how often backups run or be able to download your backup files. Also, if you need to restore your site from a backup, you’ll have to wait on hosting support to help complete the process, which could mean hours or days of downtime.
Backups need to be stored safely off-site, in a different location than the server running your site. An important component of a backup strategy is off-site storage of your backup files. If your backups are stored on the same server as your site, you'll lose your backups along with your site if your server fails or if your site gets compromised.

A backup must include your WordPress database and all the files in your installation. Some popular backup solutions claim to backup your entire WordPress site, but you may find the backup actually lacks necessary files and folders.

Make sure your WordPress backup solution backs up the following:

• The current version of the WordPress core software your site is running
• Your WordPress database
• All files in your WordPress Media Library
• All theme and plugin files

A backup solution also needs to include the ability to restore. What good is a backup if you can't do anything with it? A backup solution must include the ability to quickly and easily restore your files with little downtime.
Educating Your Clients: The Problem with WordPress Security

Unfortunately, hacks and security breaches are a real threat for WordPress site owners. Many WordPress site owners aren’t aware of the potential security threats facing their site. WordPress sites have increasingly become a target for hackers and bots because WordPress vulnerabilities can be easily exploited.

Common types of WordPress attacks include:

- Brute Force
- SQL Injection (SQLi)
- Cross Site Scripting (XSS)
- Cross-site Request Forgery (CSRF)
- File Inclusion Vulnerabilities (LFI and FRI)
- Directory Traversal

Your site’s vulnerability can be greatly minimized, but you must implement WordPress security best practices.
You can drastically improve your WordPress security with these tips:

- Choose a quality host
- Set proper permissions
- Use quality and trusted software
- Remove weak logins and enforce strong passwords
- Enable two-factor authentication
- Keep WordPress, plugins and themes updated to latest versions

**WordPress security is directly related to your WordPress backup strategy.** A crucial part of WordPress security is having a solid backup strategy. If your site gets hacked or infected with malware, you need to be able to restore your site to a clean version prior to when it was compromised.

**WordPress security depends on your WordPress maintenance.** Keeping WordPress core updated, as well as your plugins and themes, is an important part of keeping your site safe. Why? The WordPress core team and authors of plugins and themes release fixes to security vulnerabilities in new version releases, so running the latest version of anything installed on your site is critical.
Educating Clients: The Problem with WordPress Maintenance

**Keeping WordPress sites up-to-date is important but time-consuming.** Updates to plugins and themes usually require manual updates once you’ve logged into your WordPress dashboard.

**Clients tend not to update their WordPress site.**
- Fear of breaking something
- Forgetting to check whether updates are needed
- Lack of knowledge on how to perform updates

**Running updates is often an overlooked task.** In addition to adding new content and keeping a site fresh, updates for WordPress, themes and plugins need to be performed as soon as new versions are released. You may not get notified immediately of updates or you could forget to run important updates in the midst of other tasks.

**Your WordPress maintenance impacts your WordPress security.** As mentioned in the previous section, keeping your WordPress site updated has a big impact on the security of your site. Running the latest version of WordPress core, as well as your plugins and themes, means your site is not at risk of known security vulnerabilities.
Providing WordPress Backup Services For Your Clients

This is where using a professional WordPress backup plugin, like **BackupBuddy**, comes in. BackupBuddy solves all the problems of WordPress backups by providing an easy-to-use solution that covers backups, restores *and* site migration.

1. **Set up backup schedules on your client sites.** With BackupBuddy, you can run scheduled WordPress backups hourly, twice daily, daily, every other day, bi-weekly, weekly, monthly and more.

2. **Store backup files safely off-site in BackupBuddy Stash.** All BackupBuddy customers get 1GB of *free* BackupBuddy Stash storage for secure, off-site storage. BackupBuddy Stash also integrates with *iThemes Sync* so you can quickly manage all your client backup files from one convenient dashboard.

3. **Activate Stash Live for real-time, automatic WordPress backups for all your client sites.** Stash Live, a new feature in BackupBuddy 7.0, handles backing up your WordPress site automatically as changes are made, and then securely stores backup files in BackupBuddy Stash.

*Note: If you ever need to restore a WordPress site (or move the site to a new host or domain), BackupBuddy will walk you through the steps using the *ImportBuddy* tool. BackupBuddy’s WordPress migration feature is a very popular feature for WordPress developers who build custom sites for clients locally or on a temporary domain and move the entire site over to a live domain.*
Providing WordPress Security Services For Your Clients

Use the iThemes Security Pro plugin to add an extra layer of protection to your client sites. iThemes Security Pro offers 30+ ways to secure and protect WordPress sites.

1. **Use iThemes Security Pro and run a WordPress Security Check to enable recommended security settings.** After installation, use iThemes Security Pro’s WordPress Security Check feature to quickly activate the most important security settings.

2. **Encourage clients to start using two-factor authentication for their WordPress login.** iThemes Security Pro allows you to add two-factor authentication to user logins. For more instructions on setting up two-factor authentication on your WordPress site using iThemes Security, check out this tutorial.

3. **Schedule malware scans to run on your sites.** iThemes Security can run daily malware scans and will let you know via email if a problem is found.

4. **Use iThemes Security Pro to block brute force attempts, lock out bad users and much more.** View logs of iThemes Security’s actions to protect your WordPress sites.
Providing WordPress Maintenance Services For Your Clients

Use an all-in-one WordPress maintenance tool like iThemes Sync. iThemes Sync allows you to manage and run updates from one central dashboard for *all* your WordPress sites. Sync also includes a ton of other features to save you time.

**Start managing 10 sites for free with iThemes Sync.** Get your 10 free sites [here](#) and then check out the iThemes Sync Quick Setup Guide to get started.

1. **Keep WordPress, themes, and plugins up-to-date for all your client sites from one dashboard.** Instead of logging into each individual site to perform updates, Sync gives you one place to view and manage updates.

2. **Check out all 20 ways iThemes Sync can save you time in your WordPress workflow.** In addition to managing version updates, iThemes Sync also allows you to manage users and comments, run remote backups with BackupBuddy and bulk install plugins and themes across multiple sites and *much* more.
The Power of Reports: Show The Value of Your Services to Clients

Detailed reports are one of the best ways to show clients the value of your backups, security and maintenance services.

Sync Pro's WordPress Maintenance Reports handle the hard work of compiling all the update actions you took so you can justify the value (and cost) of the work you do.

With Sync Pro’s Reports, you can:

- **List Updates to WordPress Core, Themes & Plugins** - Sync Pro Reports include all update actions made to WordPress core, theme & plugins within a certain timeframe, both from the Sync dashboard and the WordPress dashboard.

- **Email Beautiful, Interactive HTML Reports to Clients** - Reports are delivered as beautiful, interactive HTML reports so clients can get a visual summary of the tasks you took to keep their site backed up, secure and up-to-date.

- **Schedule Reports to Automatically Run & Send Report Emails** - Reports can run on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, and then automatically email reports to clients.

- **White-label Your Report Emails** – Upload your own logo and set custom colors for the header, footer and button color of report emails to better match your company’s branding.

- **Include Backups & Security Actions** - Include BackupBuddy & iThemes Security actions to highlight important backup and security measures taken on your client sites.
A Note On Offering Web Hosting

Most of your clients will need hosting. If you’re not selling hosting, you’re leaving money on the table. Most clients are looking for one number to call.

- Having your own hosting increases development speed.
- You control the environment
- No unexpected issues
- No quirky control panels

Web hosting is a key part of security. According to WPWhiteSecurity, 41% of WordPress hacks occur due to a vulnerability on the hosting platform.

Offering Hosting Plans to Your Clients

- Invest in a good VPS at a reliable web host that knows WordPress, such as Liquid Web.
Get The Tools You Need To Start Building Recurring Revenue

Our professional WordPress tools are designed specifically with the freelancer in mind.

BackupBuddy

- **BackupBuddy** is the all-in-one WordPress backup plugin that handles backups, restores and migrations.
- Makes complete backups of WordPress sites including database, files, settings, themes, plugins, and more.
- Move your WordPress site to another domain or hosting easily with BackupBuddy.
- Store your backup files safely off-site with BackupBuddy Stash.
- Use **BackupBuddy Stash Live** for real-time, off-site automatic WordPress backups.
- Integrated with iThemes Sync to perform remote WordPress backup actions.

iThemes Security Pro

- Use the One-click WordPress Security Check to enable recommended settings.
- Schedule Daily Malware Scanning to ensure your sites are clean.
- Enable 2-Factor Authentication, Bruce Force Protection, Strong Password Enforcement and more.
- Integrated with iThemes Sync to perform remote WordPress security actions.
**iThemes Sync Pro**

- Manage updates (and more!) for all your WordPress sites from one place with our WordPress maintenance dashboard, *iThemes Sync*.
- Integrates with BackupBuddy and iThemes Security so you can perform remote actions and get information right from Sync.
- Use *Sync Pro’s Reporting* to share beautiful, actionable reports of what you’re doing for your clients.
- Bulk install, activate and delete WordPress themes and plugins from the Sync Dashboard.

**iThemes Training**

- *iThemes Training* offers weekly WordPress training from the convenience of your computer, via online webinars with live Q&A chats.
- A library of 800+ hours of WordPress training to take your skills and business to the next level.
- Join an active community of other WordPress freelancers, web designers and developers.

**iThemes Support**

- Get help from the WordPress experts at iThemes, with **25+ team members**, and a headquarters in Oklahoma City.
- We’ve been building WordPress tools and serving the WordPress community since 2008.
- Our mission is simple: *Make People’s Lives Awesome.*
Start building recurring revenue with the WordPress Web Designer's Toolkit.

Get everything we make at iThemes in one bundle. Unlimited licenses of all our plugins (including BackupBuddy & iThemes Security Pro), one-year membership to iThemes Training and 10+ Sync Pro sites.

Get the Toolkit