

Blogging Software Review:

WORDPRESS



WordPress is blogging[1. “Blog” is short for “Web Log” – a sort of public diary or journal maintained by the blogger online] software designed to be flexible and expandable. *K_Line Christian Online* is an example of a WordPress blog.

Background

Ad hoc and hack: Before blogging software, I designed my websites the old fashioned way. Each page was created by hand, using various programs to assist in writing the HTML code. The result was crude. Adequate in it’s day, but laughable by today’s standards.



Occasionally you still run across a web site of this ilk. Not pretty! The problem with adding content in this kind of system, is that there is no system. Each change to the website necessitates jamming something new in the mix. It’s not easy to sort or organize. The more content you have, the messier the whole site tends to get.



pMachine: I used pMachine for a few years. PMachine is now obsolete and replaced by ExpressionEngine blogging software. I haven’t used ExpressionEngine, so I can’t comment on it. My old blog, back when I was Mayor of Davie, Florida was Davie.TV. That website was built on pMachine. It is still online, but no longer active. PMachine was a good program, and worked well for me. In order to change the look and feel, I experimented and hacked. I was was happy with the result. I could easily write content and post it online. At one time I was adding about 4 or 5 entries a week.[3. On my “to do” list is to

migrate all of that old content from my old pMachine blog to this website.] Actually, I loved this blogging system. I probably would still be using it, but since it was discontinued, I had to try alternatives to set up my more recent sites. In retrospect, I liked pMachine so much, because I didn't realize what other programs, such as WordPress, were capable of.

✘ **b2evolution.** I briefly used b2evolution blogging software when I created my website for my last reelection campaign. That campaign site, is still online, and is also inactive. Frankly, I never had the time to get to know this software. I built and used the website as a mostly static site. It was easy to upgrade and add new content, though I did not really use it as a blog.

Drupal: I also briefly experimented with Drupal. Though not exclusively blogging software, it does have that capability. I found it pretty complex, with an apparent steep learning curve. I understand it is an outstanding system to use if you have the ability and time to learn it. If I'd had more free time, I probably would have put more time into the system. Plus, no matter what you think of the software, you have to like that logo. However, I was looking for something with power, but not so difficult to use, so I kept looking.



Other blogging software



Blogger: billed as a simple, easy to set up, one stop blogging solution. It is owned and operated by Google at blogger.com. I never used it and don't know much about it. In general, Google products are free, easy to use, and work well for the intended task. I suspect *blogger* is no exception. It's my understanding that if you want to get online in a hurry, and have absolutely no budget at all (not even for domain

hosting), *blogger* is an easy way to go.

WordPress Reviewed (finally)

Two things that distinguish WordPress are the many *themes* and *plugins* available to bloggers. The *themes* control the appearance—look and feel—of the website. The *plugins* expand the functions of the website. First, let's talk about the themes. There are thousands of them. Most of them for free. Without much effort, you will probably identify a few dozen that have the look you want. If you are a programmer, or proficient hacker you write your own or modify one that you *almost* like. I have several WordPress sites, each with a generally different look and feel. My business website, www.TruexLaw.COM, is a mostly static site which is intended as an online brochure. This site (K_Line Christian Online) is my most active current site. I post a lot of material, including weekly discussion notes for the Christian men's group I attend; as well as reviews, recipes, etc. I like the fact that there are so many choices of themes. You can easily pick a look that suits your subject and then tweak it a bit. Likewise there are thousands of plugins from which to choose. The plugins expand the already ample feature set of WordPress. A list of plugins used on K_Line Christian Online is available in my Tech Section.

With both themes and plugins, the challenge is not so much to find what you want, as it is to avoid the temptation to try out everything. The themes and plugins are for the most part written by volunteers who just enjoy contributing to the community. As you might expect, the quality varies. However, if you obtain themes and plugins through the official website, WordPress.ORG, contributions have to conform to submission standards. Also, plugins are rated by users, so you have an idea of the quality you are getting. Finally, since plugins are general free and as easy to remove as they are to install, using a standard interface, it's hard to go wrong. If you try a plugin and it's not what you wanted, or doesn't work, just

remove it. The only cost is a few minutes of your time.

Overall, I can't say enough nice things about WordPress. It is a fantastic program with lots of expandable features and many different possible looks. If you really need more than what is offered for free, there are companies that can design exactly what you do want, for a fee. I have used a lot of computer software products since the mid 1980's. WordPress is one of the very best of those products. And it's free! Can't beat that combination.

My rating (out of 5 stars): ★★★★★

NOTES: