GLOW®

How to Improve the Efficiency of your Dev Team in Website Maintenance

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Be more efficient
Be more profitable

Hey, I'm Phil Storey, Founder at Glow, a product that helps ambitious agency teams and freelancers to manage all of their clients' WordPress websites in one place.

I was an agency owner for 10 years and **managed thousands of WordPress websites** for businesses across the world.

Efficiency is the name of the game in WordPress maintenance. And this is more true the more sites you're managing. As you grow, you and your team need to adapt how you do things, always asking yourselves how you can be more efficient.

In my days as a web designer, I spent too long working inefficiently, to my detriment.

In this guide, you'll learn proven techniques for running a more efficient, more profitable WordPress maintenance business.

Let's do it!

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3 Pillars of Effective Website Maintenance

Firstly, let's look at the 3 pillars of effective website maintenance.

Understanding these is the key to your dev team being able to consistently deliver an efficient website maintenance service.

Pillar #1 Communication

Quite simply, nothing is more important than the quality of your communication when you're managing multiple WordPress sites.

Nothing.

You have to consistently provide an outstanding level of communication with your clients.

The thing is, the vast majority of clients don't understand the technical aspects of website maintenance.

It's unlikely that they even know what a plugin is.

They certainly won't be sat at their desk on a Tuesday afternoon wondering if you've updated the Yoast SEO plugin on their website.

What they all recognise however, is the difference between good communication and bad communication.

If you take days to respond to their queries and/or show a lack of empathy for their position, they won't be a client for long.

So always reply quickly and with empathy.

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Pillar #2 Constantly prove value

The majority of clients will only 'see' or understand the part of the service where they ask you for some help with something.

They won't see everything else: backups, uptime monitoring, security (WordPress core, plugins, themes) updates, PHP monitoring, malware removal, speed optimisation, email delivery.

They won't see it because they don't understand it.

So, if they don't contact you very often for assistance with something, it's even more vital that in between times, you're constantly proving the value of the service.

Here's a few ways you can do this:

- Sending regular emails (automate them) with data points showing how you're looking after their site

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- Sending regular reports (automate them) written in plain English, not dev speak

- Giving clients access to a dashboard where they can view data and reports whenever they want

You must constantly prove the value of your website maintenance service in order for clients to continue investing in it.

Pillar #3 Efficiency

The more efficient you are, the more profitable you'll be.

Specialist website maintenance companies aside, this service is never top of the list of priorities.

Large web development companies and agencies prioritise higher fee paying activities like website projects and digital marketing (SEO, social, content marketing etc) retainers.

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Whichever type of company you are, profitability is obviously super important.

And this is why you need to pay attention to how efficient your dev team is.

Ask yourself some of these questions:

- Are you using email to provide support?

- Are you charging the right amount for your maintenance plans?

- Have you structured your maintenance plans efficiently? Is your service mix right?

- Are your highest paid employees carrying out menial tasks?

- Could you outsource some of the work overseas?

- Are you tracking time on client accounts?

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• Can you quickly download reports and data on a client by client basis to assess profitability?

Thing is, if your team is inefficient, your clients will notice:

• You'll miss deadlines you committed to for sending them reports

• You'll be late responding to their enquiries

• You won't have important data at the click of a button to assess how this service is affecting your business

And of the 3 pillars of website maintenance, it's efficiency that we're focusing on in this book.

So, let's look at some of the reasons why your dev team might be inefficient when delivering the service.

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Common Causes of Ineffiency in Website Maintenance

It's a fact that website maintenance sometimes gets left behind a little.

Sad times.

In agencies, it's down the order of priority when compared with higher fee paying work like digital marketing retainers and website projects.

However, anyone who has sold and delivered website maintenance knows its potential in terms of adding profitable recurring revenue to the business.

So it definitely pays to iron out any inefficiencies and make sure the time that is spent on this service is pain free and profitable.

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Here's a few of the common reasons dev teams are inefficient when carrying out website maintenance:

Still using email to handle support requests from clients

The more clients you have, the more websites you're looking after.

The more websites you're looking after, the more requests you will receive.

Email starts to get messy very quickly when you're receiving lots of website support requests from clients.

It's easy to lose track of threads.

People will leave emails marked as unread, when in fact they've been read and dealt with.

The list goes on.

Recording time manually in spreadsheets

You're well aware of the importance of time tracking.

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It's no different in website maintenance.

You're also aware that there are tons of products available that have replaced the manually data entry of spreadsheets.

So when your dev team is still recording the time they spend on handling support requests, updating plugins, creating reports and all the other tasks involved in managing multiple client websites on a spreadsheet, they're costing you time.

Need to find usernames and passwords to login to clients' websites

It's true that in isolation, this doesn't take much time.

If you're using a password manager, it's even quicker.

Added together however, the process of navigating to the website login, retrieving the username and password and logging in, takes up unnecessary amounts of your dev team's time.

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And it's something that your team needs to do regularly.

Whether they're updating plugins, investigating an issue or responding to a client support request, logging into clients' websites is a very regular occurrence.

Using multiple plugins and products to carry out maintenance

There's a plugin for just about everything.

There's also plenty of other products created specifically to help your dev team with website maintenance.

Products for:

- Managing support requests
- Backups
- Uptime monitoring
- Site speed
- Site security
- Plugin updates
- and loads more

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An inefficient practice would be to use lots of these different products when there are numerous others that do it all in one.

Having to add different plugins to every client site is just a waste of time.

So now that we've identified some of the common causes of inefficient website maintenance, let's look at some ways to improve the efficiency of your dev team.

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How to Improve the Efficiency of your Dev Team

Use a support ticket system to handle client requests, not email

We're all well aware of the pitfalls of email now.

Yes, of course it still has its place. It's an awesome tool for marketing purposes for a start.

But in many situations, it just doesn't cut it anymore.

And one of those situations is when you're carrying out website maintenance.

So, if your dev team is still using email as their method of communicating with clients for support requests, it's time to change.

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A support ticket system will make your team more organised and more efficient.

It will also allow them to respond to clients' queries faster and most importantly, make your client's experience better than ever.

Here's a few ways that a ticket system beats email:

- You can assign tickets to teammates
- You can quickly view the status of the support request
- You can be prompted to record time with each reply
- You can set priority levels
- You can view the time you've already spent on a request
- Everything is easier to track
- You're more likely to meet the terms of your SLAs
- It's better for team collaboration

So start researching some support ticket software and ditch email.

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> "The ticket system is the top reason we chose Glow. We now find it so much easier managing all of our clients' website support requests."
>
> **Jag Panesar, Founder & CEO, Xpand**

Automation

There's so many ways to automate business processes today.

In website maintenance, when retainers often aren't that high, every dollar counts.

So do an audit of your dev team and see what they're working on.

Have you got some of your higher paid devs working on menial, time consuming maintenance tasks?

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If so, it'll pay to find more ways of automating things.

A key aspect of website maintenance that can be automated is security updates (plugins, themes etc).

Without automation, your dev team will need to login and out of every client website to perform security updates, which let's face it, is both boring and time consuming.

Instead, find a way to automate this process.

Most website maintenance software providers will give your dev team the ability to perform all of these updates in one click, often saving them hours of time over a given month.

Team collaboration

If your dev team can collaborate more easily, they will be more efficient and get work done faster, with less issues.

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It's very likely you already use project management tools in house and this should be no different for website maintenance.

Find some software that will allow your dev team to:

- Add multiple members of your team

- Allow Account Managers / Directors to assign team members to different accounts

- Provide developers with a way to communicate with one another about a particular issue

- View which teammate performed which task, for which client and how long it took

- Give you the ability to assign support tickets to other team members

- Allow Senior Team Leads to assess team performance

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Your dev team needs the ability to collaborate easily when managing multiple client websites.

Things will start getting messy very quickly if the software you use doesn't allow for team collaboration.

Reporting

This one is more for you, than your dev team.

In a busy agency with lots of developers, having the ability to understand their performance is crucial.

"How long did Neil take to complete the job for Company A?"

"When did Jess hand this task over to Alex for Company B?"

"Why did Ian spend 2 hours more than usual on the account for Company C in March?"

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Having this oversight on your team allows you to have the right conversations with them at the right times.

It will also help you identify areas to improve the service you're providing to clients and could lead to you being able to find more profit and negotiate higher fees.

SECTION #4

Conclusion

Efficiency is key in any business, including when delivering website maintenance services.

If you want to improve the efficiency of your dev team, start by auditing how they're doing things.

Are they using outdated systems like email and spreadsheets?

Are they using software that's ok, but not great?

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If so, start looking at these areas
as ways to improve their efficiency:

- Using a support ticket system instead of
email to handle requests from clients

- Harnessing the power of automation to
free up their time

- Find software that helps them collaborate
more easily

- Reporting tools that help you assess their
performance and identify wins

Good luck!

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THANK YOU

Find more guides and helpful resources on our website

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