



WordPress for Publishers in 2026

Presented by:

MULTIDOTS



&



VIP

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The Publishing Landscape in 2026

Presented by:

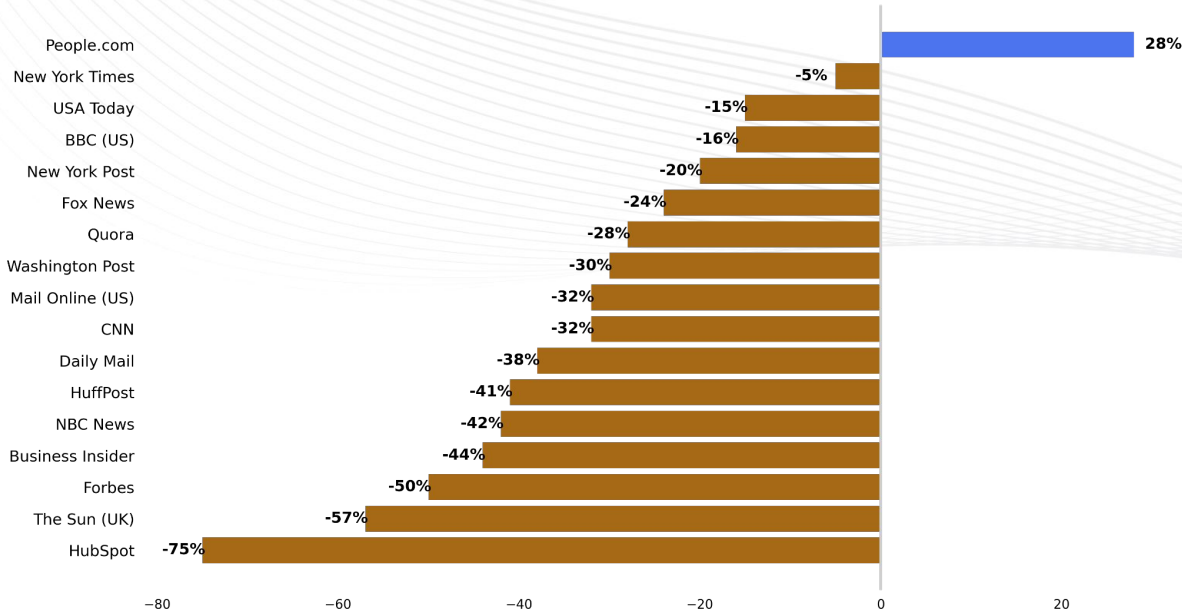


Gyles Seward

Traffic & AI

The biggest challenge facing publishers in 2026

Publisher Traffic Changes: YoY 2025

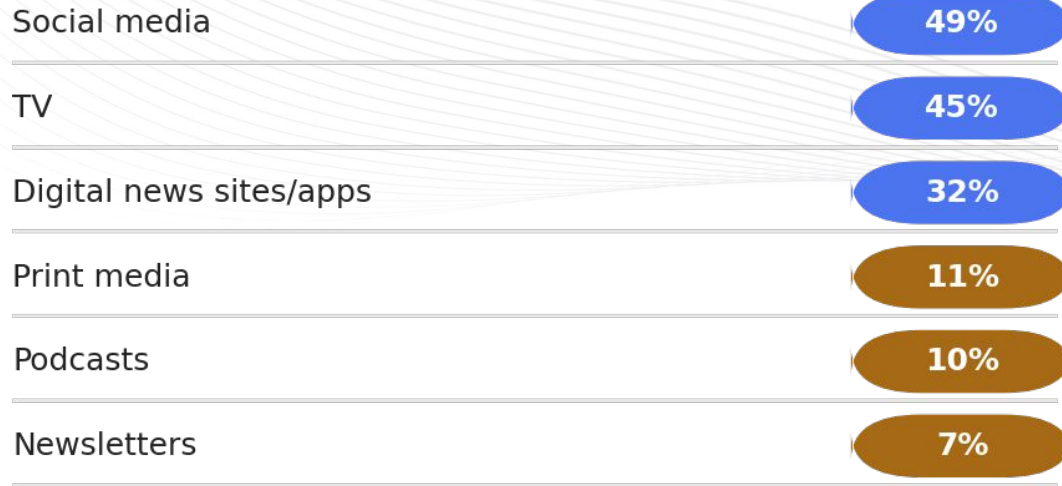


The Effects

- Average Search Traffic Down by a 3rd
- 'Zero Clicks' - resulting in 37% to 50% decline in clicks
- Revenue loss - up to 70% decline

Fragmentation & Platform Competition

Sources listed among top three news discovery channels



The Effects

- 75% Global Population prefer video over text
- ‘Traditional’ news channels continue to lose market share
- The modern reader needs to be reached in multiple ways

Regulations & Copyright

There is a helping hand, start lobbying your government

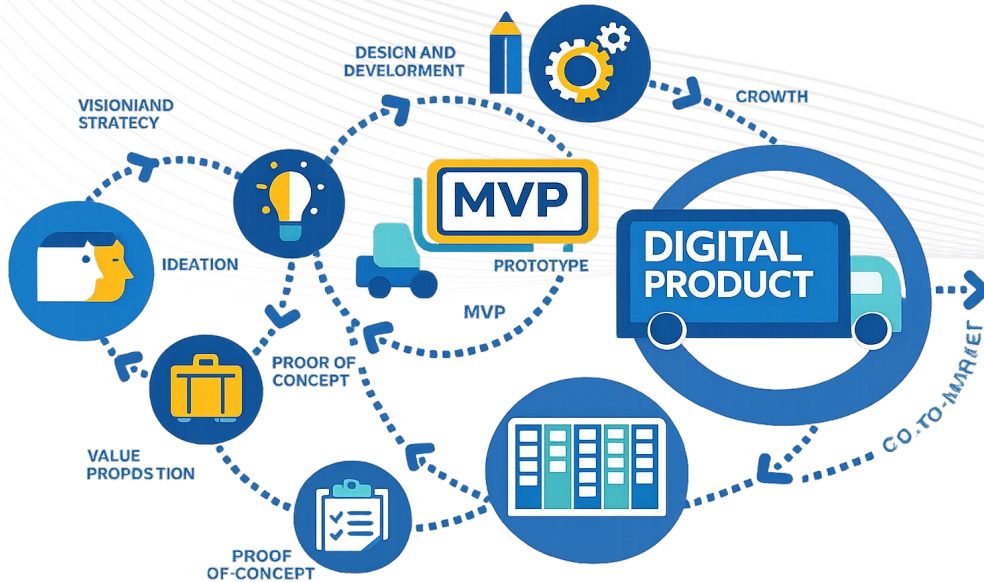
The Gemini logo features the word "Gemini" in a blue and purple sans-serif font, with a small purple four-pointed star above the letter 'i'.The Claude logo consists of an orange starburst icon to the left of the word "Claude" in a black serif font.The ChatGPT logo features a green square icon with a white interlocking knot design to the left of the word "ChatGPT" in a bold black sans-serif font.

A Helping Hand

- European publishers are pressing regulators to act
- New rules to label AI-generated content and revised copyright laws
- Lobbying - key to publishers futures

Your Platform is The Answer!

Invest in 'Product' in 2026



2026

- Understand your audience expectations
- Take your content to the people
- Use AI for monetisation and to improve how you engage with your audience

The Bottom Line

Digital Publishing in 2026 is defined by 'Structural Transition'

Re-Engineer the Journalism Business Model

Moving beyond platform-driven advertising toward diversified, audience-centric revenue built on subscriptions, data, community, and differentiated content.

Embrace and Control AI

Publishers must embrace and control AI by using it to enhance editorial insight, personalisation, and operational efficiency while maintaining human oversight, brand integrity, and audience trust.

Go To Your Audience

Distributing content across the platforms, formats, and communities where attention already exists, rather than relying solely on users coming to owned channels.

Own Your Audience

Building direct relationships through subscriptions, registrations, and community engagement, reducing dependence on third-party platforms for reach and revenue

WordPress 7.0...a publishers context

Presented by:



Aslam Multani

The Big Picture

Why 7.0 matters more than a version number

Phase 1



Block Editor
WP 5.0 (2018)

Phase 2



Full Site Editing
WP 5.9–6.7

Phase 3



Collaboration
WP 7.0 (Apr 2026)

Phase 4



Multilingual
Future

April 9, 2026

General release at WordCamp Asia

3 Releases in 2026

7.0 (Apr) → 7.1 (Aug) → 7.2 (Dec)



Real-Time Collaborative Editing

The Google Docs moment for WordPress publishing

How It Works

- Multiple editors work on the same post simultaneously
- Live cursors show who's editing which section
- CRDT-based conflict resolution ensures data integrity
- HTTP polling sync (default) — hosts can swap in WebSockets
- Offline editing with automatic sync when reconnected

Publisher Impact

- Breaking news: writer + editor + fact-checker work in parallel
- Eliminate 'post locked by another user' friction
- Replace Google Docs ↔ WordPress copy-paste workflow



Editorial Workflow Enhancements

Content collaboration and feedback loop within WordPress

Notes & Suggestions

Multi-block notes, suggestion mode, and @mentions that trigger email + dashboard notifications. The full feedback loop in one place.

Visual Revisions

Color-coded overlays: green (added), red (removed), yellow (modified). Timeline slider for scrubbing through versions in read-only review mode.

Audit Trails

Built-in content change visibility for compliance-heavy industries. Every edit tracked, every revision visually comparable.

Real-Time Co-Editing in WordPress

Live User Collaborators

Google Docs-Style Collaboration in WordPress

Collaboration is the default in content creation apps like **Canva**, **Notion**, **Sketch**, **Google Docs**, and **Microsoft 365**, except **WordPress**.

Yup- while it's easier than ever to start online publishing (thanks **WordPress!**), it's harder than ever to publish content faster and collaboratively.

Most content creation apps have a toolbar with icons for undo, redo, and share, and a right-hand sidebar with a list of collaborators:

1. You can't **real-time co-edit** in **WordPress**.
2. There's no real way to directly leave comments on a piece of content in **WordPress and empower collaboration**.
3. Copy and paste the content between **Google Docs and WordPress** leads to critical **errors and wasted time**.

Collaborators:

- Henry Watson (1 Minute ago): Hello @Angela Morrison this text should be highlighted. What do you think?
- Angela Morrison (Few second ago): Format: Text Color
- Angela Morrison (Few second ago): Hello @
- Angela Morrison (Administrator)
- Henry Watson (Editor)
- Jennifer Robles (Administrator)
- Jennifer Robles (1 Minutes ago): @John Doe The image looks good!
- John Doe (Few second ago): Thank you for your feedback.

Enterprise Governance & AI Infrastructure

Governance Features

- Connectors UI: central API key management under Settings
- Abilities API: machine-readable registry of site capabilities
- Privacy controls: configure which content AI can access
- Audit logging for all AI requests

AI Building Blocks

- WP AI Client: provider-agnostic AI API in Core
- MCP Adapter: AI agents discover site capabilities
- Content Guidelines: structured editorial standards
- Plugin ecosystem can build AI features on shared foundation
- No built-in AI writer — it's infrastructure, not product

What This Means for Publishers

Your newsroom can connect Claude, GPT, or custom models through one standardized API. AI-assisted headline generation, content tagging, SEO optimization, and translation — all governed by your editorial policies, not locked to one vendor.



New Blocks & Editor Enhancements

From page-building to publishing infrastructure

Breadcrumbs Block

Auto-generates navigation paths showing page hierarchy, customizable via PHP filters.

Icons Block

Inserts scalable vector icons directly in the editor from a REST-accessible library at `/wp/v2/icons`.

Viewport Block Visibility

Show or hide any block based on device type (mobile/tablet/desktop).

Per-Instance Custom CSS

Apply custom CSS to individual block instances via the Advanced panel.

Responsive Grid Block

Now responsive-enabled, layouts adapt across screen sizes automatically without custom CSS.

Content-Only Patterns

Patterns default to showing structured fields instead of raw blocks, keeping design locked while content stays editable.



Performance & Scalability

Client-Side Media Processing

Image resizing & compression happens in the browser before upload. Reduces server load on high-traffic newsrooms uploading hundreds of images daily.

View Transitions in Admin

Cross-document transitions replace hard page reloads. The dashboard feels like a modern SPA — faster context-switching for busy editorial teams.

PHP 7.4+ Minimum

Modern PHP unlocks better memory handling, faster execution, and security improvements. PHP 8.3 recommended for peak performance on VIP.

DataViews Admin Interface

Replaces legacy WP List Tables with inline filtering, sorting, and grouping — no page reloads. Manage thousands of posts at scale.

The Commercial Unlock

What publishers can retire or consolidate with 7.0

BEFORE 7.0 (Today's Stack)

- Google Docs for collaborative drafting
- Slack/Email for editorial feedback
- 3rd-party plugins for responsive layouts
- Custom dev for video hero sections
- Multiple plugins for AI features
- Legacy admin → slow content management

AFTER 7.0 (Consolidated)

- Native real-time co-editing in the editor
- Block-level notes replace external threads
- Core Grid, Cover, Icons, Breadcrumbs blocks
- Cover block with native video backgrounds
- One AI API → any provider, governed centrally
- DataViews → modern, fast content dashboard

WordPress 7.0 is not just a version bump.

It's a platform shift that turns WordPress from a solo CMS into a collaborative, AI-ready publishing engine.

Your Next Steps

- Spin up WP 7.0 Beta on WordPress Playground today: <https://playground.wordpress.net/>
- Audit your plugin stack for 7.0 compatibility
- Plan your PHP 8.3 upgrade path
- Start testing real-time collaboration with your editorial team

The Modern Publisher Stack

A publisher's journey: from fragmented silos to a single source of truth

Presented by:



James Hill

The Publisher's Journey: From Silos to Single Source of Truth

How a 25 + year career evolved — and what the transition taught me

START

Print First

- One Channel
- Print Only
- No Digital

PHASE 1

Home-Grown CMS

- Built In-House
- Print → Digital
- Custom Code Debt

PHASE 2

Digital Expansion

- Digital Magazines
- Mobile Apps
- Social Media Added

PHASE 3

Silo Problem

- Disconnected Systems
- Duplicated Effort
- No Single Source of Truth

TODAY

One Core CMS

- WordPress VIP
- Omnichannel Ready
- Owned & Scalable

ONE CORE CMS UNLOCKED: Collaborative editing · Editorial planning · Omnichannel repackaging · Syndication · Content licensing · Scale distribution · First-party data

The 5 Layers of the Modern Publisher Stack

1

Content Creation & CMS

Where it all begins — and where I'd do it differently. Build vs buy: open source from day one.

Open source = security ·
governance · agility · scalability

2

Audience & First-Party Data

Registration walls, newsletters, subscriptions, identity resolution. Own your readers before someone else does.

Parse.ly + CMS working in
real-time sync is the key

3

Distribution & Reach

Social, push notifications, Newsletters, microsites, syndication, content licensing, repackaging across channels.

Omnichannel is only possible
with a single source of truth

4

Monetisation

Programmatic, direct sales, paywalls, events, affiliate, microsites, licensing & Content syndication. Multiple streams = editorial independence.

Relying on one revenue source
is a race to the bottom

5

Analytics & Intelligence

Parse.ly for real-time & historic content analytics — audience behaviour to the second, at editorial level.

Content analytics + CMS in
hand = real insight for every
stakeholder made simple

First-Party Data: Know Your Audience

The CMS and content analytics must work hand-in-hand — real-time, to the second, simple enough for every editorial stakeholder

Knowing Your Audience Is Everything

Parse.ly gives editorial teams real-time insight — not just page views, but what drives loyalty and converts fly-by readers into regulars.

Real-Time Analytics at the Editorial Level

Every stakeholder sees live data on their content — to the second — without needing a data team.

Historic Content Performance

Programme future content around what your audience has proven they need and will return for.

Audience Touchpoint Mapping

Understand which channels, formats and topics drive audience — and double down on what works.

Fly-By-Reader → Loyal Reader Conversion

Identify which content turns a first visit into a subscription or registered user.

CMS + Analytics in Single Workflow

When content creation and performance data live together, publishers make better decisions faster.

Distribution & Monetisation: Maximising Every Piece of Content

A single source of truth enables every distribution and revenue strategy below — simultaneously

Distribution & Reach

Omnichannel Publishing

Web, app, social, newsletter — one publish, everywhere

Microsites & Mini-sites

Targeted brand or topic hubs, spun up quickly from core CMS

Content Syndication

License and distribute content to partner networks at scale

Content Repackaging

One asset, many formats: long read → video → social → push

Revenue Streams

Subscriptions & Paywalls

Metered, freemium, or hard — build recurring, predictable revenue

Programmatic + Direct

Metered, freemium, or hard — build recurring, predictable revenue

Branded Content & Microsites

Editorial credibility commands a premium from advertisers

Events, Affiliates, & Licensing

Diversified income that cannot be algorithmically removed

Your Content Is Your Biggest Asset — Realise Its Potential

Ask Yourself

How is Your Content Created & Served?

Challenge every tool, every workflow. Custom-built complexity has a ceiling. Open source has a community.

Do You Truly Understand Your Content?

Real-time analytics in the hands of editorial — not just data teams — changes what gets made and why.

In the Age of AI, What's Your CMS TCO?

Can your current platform keep pace? Or is developer tax and technical debt killing your agility to compete?

If I could turn back the clock, I would have migrated to WordPress VIP earlier.

- More control, less developer tax — my team built features, not infrastructure
- No complexity ceiling — scale without rebuilding from scratch
- I still owned all my code — open source, no lock-in
- Enterprise-grade security and governance baked in
- Better editorial tooling — giving writers time for compelling content
- Real-time + historic analytics to programme content and grow loyal readers

The stack changes. The fundamentals don't: know your audience
• own the relationship • let great content drive loyalty.

Editorial Workflows & Content Velocity

Presented by:



Ross Mulcahy

AI & The Future of Publishing on WordPress

Presented by:



Jeremy Fremont



Neil Powell



Gyles Seward

The Future of AI In WordPress

In 2026 WordPress becomes truly 'Agentic'

What's Coming Next

- Native AI Features in Core
- AI-Powered Site Builders
- Personalized Context Experiences
- Voice & Conversational Publishing

WordPress is moving towards an AI-first ecosystem

Why AI in WordPress Matters

AI is Changing How Content is Created

- Enables Faster Content Creation
- Smarter Editing & Optimization
- Automation of Repetitive Tasks
- Personalized User Experience

WordPress Powers 43% of the Web → Impact will be Massive

Evolution of WordPress

Traditional CMS

- Store & Publish Content
- Manual Workflows



Modern CMS

- Generate Content (images/text)
- Optimize Automatically
- Assisted Decision Making

WordPress is becoming intelligent, not just functional

AI for Content Creation

What AI Can Do Inside of WordPress

- Generate Full Article Drafts
- Rewrite Old Content
- Change Tone (Formal/Casual)
- Summarize Text
- Translate Content

Can increase the overall speed of content creation and ideation.

AI for Media & Design

AI Capabilities

- Generate Images from Text
- Auto-Generate Image Alt Text
- Remove Backgrounds
- Suggest Layouts / Designs

This translates to less dependency on design tools or design team members

AI for Optimizations (SEO/GEO)

AI Can Support With

- Meta Title & Description Generation
- Keyword Suggestions
- Content Scoring
- Internal Link Suggestions

This will help your team produce better optimized content with less effort

WordPress 7.0 AI Demo

Now Let's See This in Action

Seeing is believing.

Risks & Limitations

Be Aware of:

- AI Hallucinations
- Low-Quality / AI Slop Content
- SEO Penalties (if misused)
- Privacy & Data Concerns
- API Costs

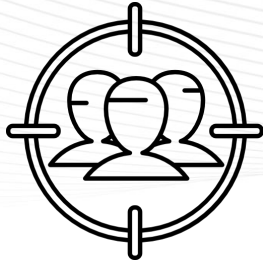
AI is a tool, not a replacement

Hyper Personalisation



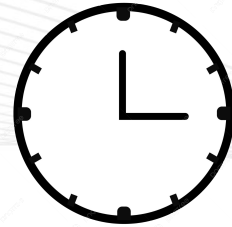
Right
Message

+



Right
Audience

+



Right
Time

+



Right
Channel

Hyper Personalisation

Audience Acquisition

- Personalised homepage layouts
- Geo-targeted headlines
- Search intent matching
- Referral-aware landing experiences

Engagement

- Dynamic article recommendations
- “Continue reading” journeys
- Topic / journalist follow features
- Personalised newsletters

Personalisation

- Predictive content recommendations
- Generative summaries tailored to user interests
- Automated segmentation
- Real-time experimentation loops
- Editorial decision support

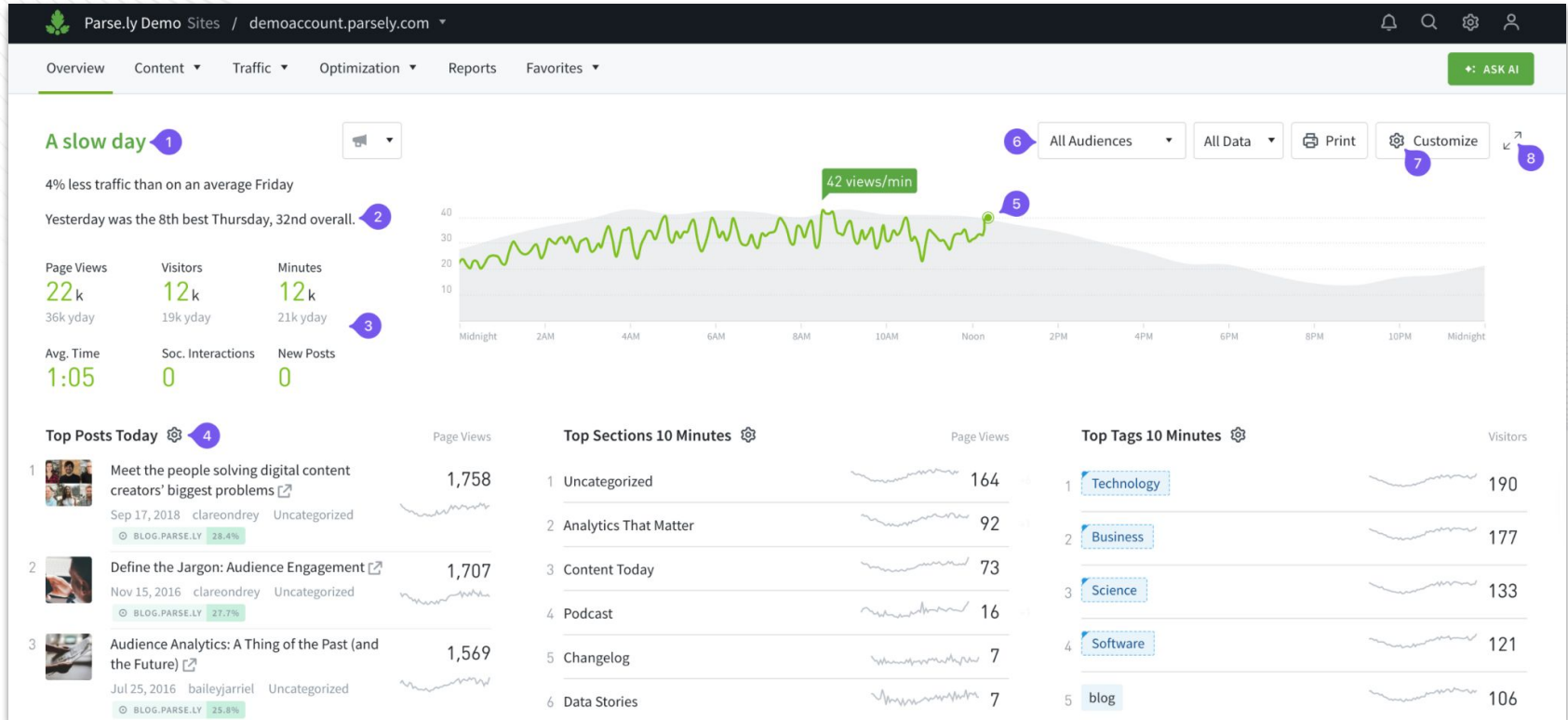
Subscription Growth

- Propensity-based paywalls
- Tailored offers and bundles
- Onboarding journeys
- Trial-to-paid optimisation

Parsley Demo



Neil Powell



Publisher Case Studies

Presented by:



Jay Moore

Ask Media

Ask Media Group manages a high-traffic network reaching 250+ million monthly unique visitors. Facing the limitations of an outdated legacy CMS, they partnered with Multidots to migrate 11 digital properties to WordPress in just 12 weeks. By leveraging WordPress Multisite and custom engineering, we consolidated their infrastructure to maximize operational efficiency and enhance monetization across their entire portfolio.

Yesterday

- Legacy CMS (Arbotron)
- Slow Page Loads
- Restrictive Editorial Workflow
- Manual Ad Handling



Today

- WordPress
- 65% Improvement on Page Speed
- Custom Gutenberg Experience
- Streamlined Revenue Operations

ABUV Media

ABUV Media, a high-growth platform specializing in education, career development, and personal finance, partnered with Multidots to scale its expanding portfolio of over 50 WordPress-based subdomains. Over a six-year partnership, Multidots served as an integrated development center, providing the technical resilience and database architecture necessary to manage explosive growth. This strategic collaboration transformed ABUV Media from a startup into a multi-million dollar business, resulting in a successful acquisition by HigherEducation.

Yesterday

- Start Up
- Fragmented Content
- Small Team, Slow Processes
- Inefficient Utilization of Talent



Today

- \$15 Million ARR
- Unified Database Architecture
- Small Team, Rapid Development
- 60%+ Margins By Optimizing

Closing Remarks

Presented by:



Josh Fosburg

Questions & Answers

Thank you

Presented by:

MULTIDOTS



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