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## CTRL+CLICK CAST #043 -

### When Is WordPress the Right Fit? with Angie Herrera

[Music]

**Lea Alcantara:** You are listening to CTRL+CLICK CAST. We inspect the web for you! Today, our friend, Angie Herrera, returns to the show this time to talk about WordPress. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host:

**Emily Lewis:** Emily Lewis!

**Lea Alcantara:** Today's episode is sponsored by [Visual Chefs](http://visualchefs.com), a versatile web development agency with expertise in content management system and custom web application development. Through partnerships with designers, agencies and organizations, Visual Chefs propels the web forward. Visit [visualchefs.com](http://visualchefs.com) to learn more. On major sponsor news, [Pixel & Tonic](http://pixelandtonic.com) announced that they are releasing a developer preview for Craft 3. You can sign up to download it at [buildwithcraft.com/devpreview](http://buildwithcraft.com/devpreview).

**Emily Lewis:** Before we dive in to today's episode, I wanted to remind our listeners that we have a donate option for the show on our site, [ctrlclickcast.com](http://ctrlclickcast.com). So if you love CTRL+CLICK and have a little spending money, consider donating to help us keep the show going. A dollar, five dollars, whatever you can spare will help us continue to deliver great content, high quality audio and transcripts for each and every episode. Now, back to the business at hand.

[Music ends]

So Lea and I have talked on occasion about not using WordPress because we favor other CMS's and are more adept with those CMS's. But WordPress does have a place so we've asked



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ExpressionEngine veteran Angie Herrera back to the show to talk about why and how her agency decides when to tackle a WordPress project. Angie is the owner and creative director of Block 81, a small Portland-based branding and web studio. She also runs the Portland CMS Meetup, and recently launched the [Budget-sites.com](http://Budget-sites.com). Welcome to the show, Angie. I'm glad to have you back.

**Angie Herrera:** Thanks, ladies, it's great to be back.

**Lea Alcantara:** So Angie, can you tell our listeners a bit more about yourself?

**Angie Herrera:** Sure. Let's see, where do I start? Well, I've been in this industry for about 15 years now, which is a little bit unbelievable to me because I feel like a newbie just about every day.

**Lea Alcantara:** [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** But yeah, I started Block 81 which was under a new name, a different name rather years ago. I started it in 2003, so we've been doing that for a while and we've gone through some very, very slow growth, but there's someone else on our team now, Nicole (Ramsey), who is super, super helpful with a lot of things, and I've gotten her up to speed for the most part with ExpressionEngine.

We've been working with Craft, and she's our in-house WordPress guru, so that's when we kind of decided to move onto doing a few WordPress things here and there. But outside of that, when I'm off the computer, which is hopefully more often nowadays, but I'm just spending time with friends, family and my partner and playing a lot of soccer.

**Emily Lewis:** Oh.

**Angie Herrera:** So that's about it.



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**Emily Lewis:** So you mentioned that you started your agency, what was it, 2003, but you're under a new name now.

**Angie Herrera:** Right.

**Emily Lewis:** So can we talk a little bit about Block 81 and why decided to rebrand last year.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah. Well, the previous name was 420 Creative. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** And 420 was actually a reference to my birthday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, and so...

**Emily Lewis:** Oh, happy belated birthday.

**Lea Alcantara:** Sure, Angie, sure. [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** Thank you.

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, and so that's the reaction I would get where people would just kind of turn their heads a little bit and be like, "It's 420, really?" And so for the first, I don't know, I want to say six, seven, eight or nine years of my business, it wasn't that big of an issue. Once in a while we'd get an inquiry from actually someone who is involved in the medical marijuana industry, and those projects never worked out, go figure. So then in the last – I want to say – three or four years, it started to become a problem, like I think it was in 2013, possibly 2014, where we actually started to lose business because of it.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Lea Alcantara:** Wow!



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**Angie Herrera:** There were a couple of clients who were like, “We’re not comfortable with that name being on our website.” So I said, “We don’t have to put it on there. Nobody has to know. Blah, blah, blah.” It didn’t matter. They decided it was someone else. As far as I know, it’s purely because of the name. So to rebrand had been coming up now and again over the years, and that was just the final push over the edge to finally make the plunge and rebrand, and so that’s why I switched to Block 81.

**Emily Lewis:** Oh, it’s a hard lesson in naming and branding.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah.

**Emily Lewis:** So what’s Block 81. Is that something related to Portland?

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, it is. I hired a copywriter who we worked with on various projects from time to time, and he and I were going back and forth trying to figure things out, and we came up with something that I liked, but it didn’t work out. There was just too much conflict, I mean, over copyright issues, trademark issues, like that, because I also had to consult my attorney, which is a big deal. I suggest if you’re going to rebrand, that you do that.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** So finally, we were just kind of at a dead end a little bit. So I just started reading up a little bit on Portland, because originally I didn’t want to have it related to Portland much at all, but then I kind of backtracked on that because I felt that it is kind of part of who we are.

**Lea Alcantara:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** So I just read up on the history of Portland, and one of the original founders, I might be telling the story wrong, but it’s on Wikipedia, if you want to look it up. [Laughs]



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**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** Basically, one of the founders, the original founders, and there were like two to start with and then they expanded to four, so there were like four people, four guys, who essentially started the city, and one of them, there was this bit of history where he had a piece of land right here on the waterfront, on the Willamette River, and it was called Block 81, and so that really just stuck out to me, and I just kind of put it aside and I kept reading, kept reading, and then I was like, “That just sounds really cool and it’s tied to the history of Portland.” So I was like, “Let’s go with that.” I asked my partner, I asked my copywriter, I asked a couple of other people, and they were like, “Yeah, that sounds great.”

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** So that’s what we stuck with.

**Emily Lewis:** Great. Yeah, so how has the adjustment been?

**Angie Herrera:** It’s been good. It’s been really good actually, though I don’t really get questions anymore about it, which is kind of nice because then we can focus on, “Hey, this is what we can do for you” versus “Well, okay, so here’s a story.”

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** And so it’s been good, and then it was a little rough at first just because we were still dealing with client work while trying to do this rebrand at the same time, so it was....

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara:** Oh yeah.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, I’m sure you guys know, I’m sure.



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**Lea Alcantara:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** So I felt like a little bit like a chicken with its head cut off that's running around like crazy.

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** But after all that settled, after we launched the site, and I had finished up the logo and everything, everything has been smooth sailing, and it's actually been a nice reboot because we've been able to revisit our processes and streamline them and improve them and really make them all fit under the Block 81 umbrella. So that's been a really fun thing to do actually.

**Emily Lewis:** Awesome, I feel like we can have a whole episode just talking about that.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, totally.

**Emily Lewis:** But let's get to today's topic at hand. So before we talk about WordPress, let's first just talk about your CMS experience. What was your first CMS?

**Angie Herrera:** My first CMS was actually WordPress.

**Lea Alcantara:** Oh.

**Emily Lewis:** Oh.

**Angie Herrera:** Okay, so let me back up. When I first started freelancing, this was right after college. So right after college, I actually had an internship in Europe, and then after that, I had a job here in Portland for a couple of years, and during that time, I was doing some freelancing. In Europe, in Spain specifically, when I was at the internship, I was actually tasked with managing the website for the department at this university that I was working at, and it was the first time I actually dove into web at all, and I knew very little about it.



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But fast forward, when I started freelancing and then when I started my business officially, I was doing mostly print work. I'm more of a traditional graphic designer where I went to school to learn print design, graphic design, logo design, et cetera, and so web was very, in a way as far as the design industry goes, it was kind of in its infancy, and so I was just working along doing stuff for clients, and then it started to snowball. Clients started to ask for website design, and I was like, "Oh, okay."

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** So I started researching and I had to learn how to code on my own and I came across WordPress. I don't remember how, I think it was the most popular platform out there at the time, which I guess is still kind of true, and so I learned how to hack together WordPress and get it to work so that clients can update it themselves and update their websites themselves and be able to add blog posts and whatnot. So that was my first, I guess, foray into content management systems.

WordPress never really felt a 100% right for me. So then I was working with another studio in Portland around 2006. We were working on this project that we needed another CMS solution, and WordPress had that. WordPress MU, it's kind of like ExpressionEngine's Multi-site Manager, but this project didn't really make sense to use WordPress, and that's actually when I came across ExpressionEngine. So that was my second CMS ever.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** And I ended up using that for years and years and years until Craft came along, and actually I did dabble in modX before ExpressionEngine. I think I built one or two sites in that, and so I had a little bit of experience in that regard, but when I stumbled across ExpressionEngine, it was a whole new world, and it was great, it was just amazing to me how flexible it was and how it didn't tie



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you into any particular coding style or something like that. So that's kind of the history of my CMS background.

**Lea Alcantara:** Emily, I'm actually curious, how about you? Like what was your first CMS?

**Emily Lewis:** Oh, ExpressionEngine.

**Lea Alcantara:** Oh, really?

**Emily Lewis:** There was like an in-house developed something that just was on my computer that we could access for the company I worked for, but you know all of my websites were static pages, they did not have anything tied to a database in any way. Nothing was templated, so yeah.

**Timestamp:** 00:09:54

**Lea Alcantara:** Interesting because like when I first started like fiddling around with stuff, I flitted like a butterfly on different CMSs, like I used Graymatter and then I used MovableType for the longest time, and then right before I went into ExpressionEngine, I was playing around with Textpattern as well, which was similar to EE.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah, it's interesting to hear how EE actually got into our professional lives pretty quickly.

**Emily Lewis:** One of the things that Angie mentioned that made me think about something we were talking about yesterday, there was an online event called the Sherpa Summit, and we were sort of talking about WordPress and other tools that have a low barrier of entry, and a lot of times I get a little snobby and I'm just like, "Oh, I can't possibly whatever."

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]





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**Emily Lewis:** But there's a valid point that Angie literally demonstrates by telling us how she got started as she didn't know anything, but she looked up and found that WordPress was the most popular thing, and I'm guessing they had some themes that you could use so you could get up and running and putting your work online and getting clients online without a huge curve, and there's a value to that.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, definitely, definitely.

**Emily Lewis:** And I just wanted to mention, this came out yesterday I believe, there are some usage statistics and market share of WordPress for websites, and it says the overall finding is that WordPress is used by 60.4% of all websites whose content management systems we know. That's 23.8% of all websites.

**Lea Alcantara:** Wow!

**Emily Lewis:** So that is...

**Lea Alcantara:** That's insane.

**Emily Lewis:** It's kind of mind-boggling when you think about it. It really is, which is why I'm glad we're finally having the conversation about using WordPress.

**Lea Alcantara:** Well, what I want to ask them is since WordPress was the first one and then you saw EE has better potential, there are a lot of people who decide to focus on WordPress. Do you abandoned WordPress when you focused on EE for a bit, or were you always still doing WordPress on the side while you did EE?

**Angie Herrera:** I guess you could say that I abandoned WordPress.

**Lea Alcantara:** Okay.



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**Angie Herrera:** And a big part of that was because WordPress is actually pretty PHP heavy.

**Lea Alcantara:** Okay.

**Angie Herrera:** And that was a big hill for me to climb because when I started learning WordPress, I was actually also learning CSS to build semantic sites in pure CSS and so there was already a lot that my brain was taking in, and so having to deal with PHP that I couldn't read, I mean, I couldn't write a single line of PHP to save my life. Now, it's a little bit different. I can understand PHP enough that I can kind of see what's going on. But back then, that was a big hurdle.

So when I did stumble upon ExpressionEngine, it was a whole different. It was a brand new door that opened up for me, and I didn't have to learn all this PHP, and granted, EE has its own syntax, but that was much, much easier for me to grok than PHP, and so I did abandon WordPress to a certain degree. I mean, we did still have one or two clients that we were supporting on a semi-regular basis that I did have to go into WordPress a couple of times here and there, but for the most part, once I found EE, I was pretty much building everything in it.

**Emily Lewis:** So as I mentioned when I gave your introduction, I mentioned you have this [Budget-sites.com](http://Budget-sites.com). From what I understand looking at the site, they're basically like fixed-priced WordPress sites.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, yeah.

**Emily Lewis:** So you're now offering this. Was this part of your rebranding? Was this a services refocus, or why is this now in the mix for you?

**Angie Herrera:** Well, part of it was just adding another revenue stream, to be honest. We had a really rough year last year, and it kind of made me – well, not kind of – it really did make me refocus on what our approaches are and what we're good at and all this other stuff. I really had to have a



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deep self-reflection, so to speak, and so we offer, aside from the core services of Block 81 which still are our bread and butter, and we would never give that up because it's so great and fun, and it such a variety, but we also offer a little bit of email marketing and we also do web hosting. But we needed something else, and I wanted to capitalize on the fact that Nicole who works with me knows WordPress pretty well. I mean, we have a couple of clients whose site we maintain that are on WordPress and I hardly ever touch those sites.

Nicole is doing all of that work, and so I thought it would be good to capitalize on that in addition to the fact that we were still getting inquiry from people who didn't have \$6,000 or \$8,000 or \$10,000 to spend on a website, they only have a few thousand dollars, but they wanted something that they can manage, it was simple and maybe have a blog and it didn't require all these extra bells and whistles. There's a definite market out there for that, and I also took a look around and a lot of these studios that offer these really cheap websites, they're not doing a great job and so I figured if we could combine Nicole's expertise in WordPress along with my now limited experience in WordPress, but along with what I've learned over the years with custom web design and development, then I think we have a really good product.

Right now, we haven't really done much with Budget-Sites. Part of that is just me because I haven't marketed it. We've been very, very busy, but that really is why we decided to open up Budget-Sites and see if we could open up another revenue stream and create another client base.

**Emily Lewis:** It makes sense. We also had a rough year last year from a business perspective. It actually sounded like...

**Lea Alcantara:** It's like a cliché. Everyone has been telling me this.

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah.



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**Angie Herrera:** Yeah.

**Emily Lewis:** That last year was just like hell, but then you add on to the fact what you went through as well, we did that rebranding at the same time. [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** Right.

**Emily Lewis:** And it was. It occurred to me, and in fact, it's one of the things that I've prioritized for the intern we have working for us, for her to learn WordPress because I'm thinking long term, if she gets skilled enough in that and Lea and I can convey to her like what you're saying, you can bring to the table when you and Nicole are working on Budget-Sites, your history with custom building with a fundamental understanding of WordPress, that could be another revenue stream for when we do have another slow year. Because one thing we saw plenty of last year was request for WordPress bids, and we just don't do that work.

**Lea Alcantara:** We ignored that.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah, we just ignored them, yeah.

**Emily Lewis:** They weren't huge in terms of budget, but in a rough year, you don't need huge. [Laughs] You just need those.

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah.

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah.

**Angie Herrera:** I mean, \$1,500 or \$2,000 or \$3,000. It makes a nice little difference when you are having a rough year for sure.



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**Emily Lewis:** All right, so let's talk about deciding about CMSs and knowing what's right for what you're doing. So what do you usually consider when you're choosing a CMS for a project, because you mentioned at the beginning that you've worked with ExpressionEngine obviously, but you're also working with Craft. You're not dealing with WordPress on a more regular basis. So what goes into the decision making process for you?

**Angie Herrera:** Well, a lot of that it just becomes intuitive, just from experience of working in the industry for a number of years. But one of the first things we look at is budget. If we have a client that approaches us, there's a certain threshold that we have, and so if they're below that threshold, then we're not going to use something like ExpressionEngine or even Craft, and part of that is just because our process at Block 81 is very detailed and thorough, and I think we provide a premium service, like I'm sure you do and many of our colleagues do as well, but not everybody is looking for that.

Not everybody is coming at it from a very business-savvy, marketing-savvy position. Some people, they are just small business owners and they just want a website because they need something up and they want it to look good and that's all they really care about, and so the budget is the first thing that we look at. The other things that we look are the features and what they want right now. Are they wanting a shopping cart? Are they wanting multi-language? Are they wanting – I don't know – fancy sliders and all these other stuff? So we kind of start to break it down, “Okay, that can be easily done in EE or maybe Craft or maybe WordPress,” those sort of things.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** Then we ask them, we get into what their goals are, where they see their website going and how it's going to affect their business and grow their business over the next few years, and



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then that probably makes the most impact because we want to put our clients on a platform that they can grow with.

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah.

**Angie Herrera:** And the thing that I have experienced or that I have noticed with WordPress, again, I don't consider myself a WordPress guru by any means, and so I'm sure that there are people out there who would completely disagree with me, but in my observations and experience with WordPress, clients can quickly outgrow it, particularly if they're needing all these different kinds of content types and entry types, and e-commerce even. I know that there are e-commerce plugins for WordPress, but I find that they're not great whereas if you go with a dedicated e-commerce platform like Shopify, for instance, you're going to get a better experience.

I mean, it's going to work better for your business, but then if they're needing a site that does all these different things, then something like EE might make more sense, or in some cases, we don't really do this. I mean, it's been years since we've done this because CMS solutions are so great nowadays, but sometimes a custom CMS, something that is just built specifically for that client makes the most sense. Like I said, that's rare for us, but it is an option.

**Emily Lewis:** If you did something like that, a custom one, would you do it like off of like Laravel or CodeIgniter or something like that or would it be just totally from scratch? Would they be of framework?

**Angie Herrera:** I would probably put it on a framework. We don't do a lot of custom development at that level, so it's something that we would have another partner studio or agency come on and help us out with that.

**Emily Lewis:** Right.



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**Angie Herrera:** But everybody I know that does that sort of thing, they're on Laravel or CodeIgniter, although Laravel seems to be the popular kid at school.

**Emily Lewis:** The new hotness...

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah, yeah. [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah. [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah.

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**Lea Alcantara:** So we talked about like what you consider choosing a CMS. Something that Emily and I have started to change a little bit is when we decide what CMS to work with. Historically, we kind of like when we see a prospect, we kind of almost choose a CMS to work with almost immediately and then we do the bid with that in mind, but these days, we're kind of like, "No, we have to go through the entire discovery process." You have to engage with us first before we even decide what CMS they work with. How about you? Like when do you decide whether you use ExpressionEngine or Craft or WordPress?

**Angie Herrera:** Right, we're kind of going through the same thing. I'm trying to transition more away from talking about technology early on in the sales process. So the thing that I've run into, however, is that these prospective clients, some of them will just flat out ask you, "Well, what CMS would you put my site on?"

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** And at that point, I'm like, "Well..." I'm not super quick on my feet, so I'll try to come up with an answer, but generally, it's, "Well, it depends on what your features are." So I'm trying to



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get better myself because I'm pretty much the salesperson, but I'm trying to get better at telling the client that, "Look, we need to go through this discovery process, not just in a sales process, but also in the actual design development process to figure out what the exact scope is and what those features are, and from there determine what the best solution is for you."

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah, I feel like that has got to be the best approach. I mean, there are always going to be exceptions to the rule, but it's one of those things where once you go through discovery, you just learn so much more about it than you can in some of those early sales phases, you know?

**Angie Herrera:** Right.

**Emily Lewis:** There's a limit to how much time you can invest in the sales process if you want to be a profitable business.

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis:** That's just the reality. Not to mention, these clients are coming to us and they know their business. They don't necessarily know the CMSs, so getting them to focus on their business really helps us advise them best.

**Angie Herrera:** Right.

**Emily Lewis:** And I do, my gut feeling is that like that's the best way to go, and like you said, we're just trying to get better at it.

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis:** Better at communicating that.

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]

**Lea Alcantara:** It's always easier said than done though.





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**Emily Lewis:** Yes.

**Angie Herrera:** Oh yeah.

**Lea Alcantara:** Like especially...

**Emily Lewis:** You want to give people answer.

**Lea Alcantara:** Exactly, especially as in the topic of the day when it involves WordPress, so like a lot of people might just insist, insist on WordPress, and we have a client we're actually moving away from WordPress for a good reason because of the scope of her project and her goals, et cetera, but when she told a few colleagues about the fact that she's moving away from WordPress, they told her that she was crazy.

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara:** And that's somebody who doesn't develop websites, that's not somebody who does it for a living, it's just somebody...

**Emily Lewis:** Who has a WordPress site and likes it.

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah, exactly, and then told her that she was insane for deciding to leave WordPress. That's definitely a client education type of thing, but it's scary a little bit, in that even after you've sold them moving from WordPress that other people give them resistance.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara:** So they have to be strong and being like, "Oh okay, Colleague ABC just told me I was an idiot. Maybe let's backtrack." You know?



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**Angie Herrera:** Right. Well, I think that's a result of WordPress being so ubiquitous. It's out there, it's everywhere. It's not only designers and developers that know about it, clients know about it, they've heard about it, and the fact that it's free and open source, it's a nice price tag for a lot of clients.

**Lea Alcantara:** People love the word "free," even if it's free compared to like a negligible amount of money, you know?

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]

**Lea Alcantara:** Well, and also that asterisk of it's not completely free. There's a lot of...

**Emily Lewis:** Hidden...

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah, hidden fees because there are going to be commercial add-ons.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, right.

**Lea Alcantara:** There is the actual development time, et cetera, et cetera and so forth. We can talk about that, but WordPress is popular for a reason.

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara:** So let's talk about why. What are its strengths?

**Angie Herrera:** Well, I actually had to ask Nicole about this. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** But WordPress, one of its strengths is that you can host it yourself on your own server or you can go with wordpress.com, which is its hosting arm, and so that really kind of allows



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people to have the power of it in whatever conditions they require. So if they don't want to have to deal with hosting and hosting companies, then they don't have to. They just go with the wordpress.com. The other strength of WordPress is the community. I mean, a part of that is just because it's huge.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** There are so many people using WordPress on different levels that it's just a huge community, and part of that is because it's been around a while, and so these developers that have been working with WordPress for so long know a lot and they've been through all the iterations that WordPress has gone through. That's a big plus as well, and WordPress is actively developed, and I think that regardless of any CMS, actually, that is a big plus because once a platform starts to get stale, you kind of start to have a little doubt in it, and so I think those are probably the three biggest strengths.

**Emily Lewis:** Well, what about the flipside of the coin? What are some of WordPress' weaker points?

**Angie Herrera:** It can be hard to extend for non-technical users. So for instance, WordPress has a great plugin architecture. The problem I find is finding really good plugins can be a long and daunting task, particularly if you're not embedded in the WordPress community, if you don't have your own circle of WordPress developers. So it becomes difficult to really find the good plugins and whatnot, and a lot of times, when you want to do a specific thing, you have to hack WordPress to a certain degree because it doesn't have a lot of flexibility, and so what ends up happening is that that becomes another line item essentially and the budget starts to balloon a little bit and you're basically going against the initial, "Well, WordPress is easy and it will be less expensive," and so that's when that deciding which CMS to use comes into play.



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**Emily Lewis:** Has there been anything about WordPress that has surprised you, good or bad?

**Angie Herrera:** Let's see, something that surprised me, I don't think so. Well, actually, I take that back. I guess the continuous fanboyism of WordPress does surprise me quite a bit.

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** Because I feel like a lot of these fanboys, they're so in love with WordPress that they won't look at anything else.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** Which is too bad, and I think that this is more prevalent in the WordPress community as far as I've seen, but I've seen it in other areas too. I mean, there are EE fanboys. There are Craft fanboys or whatever. But in WordPress, it's just crazy. It's crazy, and so it's also a little sad to me because it's just another tool. It's a tool in the toolbox and you really need to think about the client and the client's customer to build the right solution, and what that back end platform ends up being really doesn't matter in the long run.

**Lea Alcantara:** It's interesting how this industry, it's so protective of its tools, you know?

**Angie Herrera:** Yes.

**Lea Alcantara:** There's always that Photoshop versus Sketch discussion or everything needs to be dynamic versus static, and blah, blah, blah.

**Angie Herrera:** Tabs versus spaces.

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah, yeah, exactly.

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]



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**Lea Alcantara:** It's just Sublime versus Textmate.

**Angie Herrera:** Right.

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah, it's just like ongoing, but at the end of the day, use what makes you do your job well, you know? [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis:** And you know what, this comes from a place of like assuming you have a lot of free time to mess around with stuff, which I don't, but in the imaginary world in my head, I don't want to exclude anything.

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** Because while we choose not to use WordPress, it's not because we're like, "We're never going to use WordPress," it's that we do not have the support or skill set to do it justice in any way.

**Angie Herrera:** Right, right.

**Emily Lewis:** Whether that's for a small site or not, like I wouldn't even want to pull off a small quick kind of thing, because we're here for our clients, bottom line.

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis:** But I've worked in it, I've messed with it, I've themed things, and these things inform your decision making process as a whole. They let you know what's out there, so if you're a WordPress fanboy or you're an EE fanboy and you're not looking at other systems because you're just loyal, you're doing yourself a disservice. Because if you're an EE fan, you never touch WordPress, you never touch Craft, you never touch anything else, seeing how those systems work



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can also give you ideas and inspiration, and especially if you're like a plugin developer or something like that, I find that whole like taking sides kind of thing. [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** Definitely. Yeah, I know.

**Lea Alcantara:** It's a little weird, yeah.

**Angie Herrera:** It's like you're saying, I mean, time is limited. I know that we've been very busy, and yeah, I would love to play around with WordPress in more depth, and I would love to play around with other CMSs that are out there like Perch or ProcessWire or what have you. But as you know there are only so many hours in the day, and at some point, your friends and family around you are going to be like, "Oh, you need to get off the computer." [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** Right, exactly. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara:** But you do have experience with a few CMSs out there. I am curious, what if any, is there something that you do with WordPress all the time that you don't do in other systems?

**Angie Herrera:** That's a good question and it's tough one to answer because I've been trying over the last couple of years to be a lot more open to using WordPress and kind of go against the grain, and that maybe just part of me wanting to rebel against people who are like, "No, don't ever touch WordPress." Because like Emily was saying, it's a little bit of a disservice.

WordPress is popular for a reason, and so the thing that I've encountered though is that whenever we get clients coming to us, asking for a solution, once we've reviewed the scope and determined things, a lot of times, WordPress is not the right solution. But here's an example, we do have a client right now that is on I believe still in ExpressionEngine 1, and they are a really small client. They only need to update a couple of things on their website maybe a couple of times a year, and so WordPress might actually be easier for them, and part of that is because it is free.



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It's not going to require all these plugins that are going to cost money, and so it will be a really good solution for them. So again, it goes back to really knowing what the scope of the project is, but for the most part, I find that smaller, and I don't mean small in a number of pages necessarily, but smaller sites that don't have a ton of bells and whistles. I mean, the site could have gazillion number of hits a month or whatever and it can have pages after pages and blogs and multiple – I don't know but I'm pretty sure they don't do multiple channels, but it could be a pretty large site, but it's still a simple site at its core, and so WordPress would work fine for that.

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**Emily Lewis:** So you talked a little bit about the kind of project that feels like a right fit and to me, what I'm hearing, it's not only that it's simple in terms of, like you said, it's not the pages, but the simple structure in terms of like what they need to maintain in the system.

**Angie Herrera:** Right.

**Emily Lewis:** But are there any types of clients that are particularly well-suited for WordPress?

**Angie Herrera:** I wouldn't say so, because client education is really, really, really important. You can have the most intuitive control panel at the back end or whatever, and there's always going to be one client who's not going to get it, and that's fine. I mean, it's not their job to know right away how their CMS works. You can compare back ends and pick it apart, but I think we as designers and developers, we just naturally do that because we're in there just about every day in all these different control panels, and so we can say, "Oh, WordPress has a better back end because of X, Y and Z. Oh no, ExpressionEngine does because of A, B, and C." Well, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter because if you're not training your client right, if you're not showing them how to properly use their system, it doesn't make a difference at all.



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**Lea Alcantara:** Speaking of that, how do you train your clients to use the system?

**Angie Herrera:** Oh. Oh man, we've kind of been all over the board. I'm trying to find the right blend, but as of late, we've been doing kind of a live screencast if you will, so kind of like one of those summit thing. So we get on UberConference or Skype or whatever. I take them to the training. Nicole is going to start doing trainings as well, and we plan out what we need to cover, all the important things, and we usually do one 1-hour training, but sometimes we'll do a second one because the site is big enough that it needs that additional training. We also record those trainings so that the client has them.

**Lea Alcantara:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** And in ExpressionEngine, we actually put them inside in an accessory that we build, and so they have that access all the time, and we did try to do like a PDF cheat sheet, but that has become very, very difficult because the back ends of the CMSs have become so custom tailored to the client, so having a generic cheat sheet is kind of difficult, but we're working on it.

**Emily Lewis:** How have your clients responded when you've handed over a WordPress site in terms of picking it up? Do they feel comfortable working in it?

**Angie Herrera:** Well, it's been a long time since we've done that. So I don't really have a good answer, but I think my generic answer is that they would be fine in it. Again, it's a matter of educating them and training them.

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah, I think the only thing that sticks out to me is a point of comparison, and granted you're not dealing with this actively right now.

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]





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**Emily Lewis:** But every time we've handed over an EE site or Craft site, like clients have commented how awesome it was. Even Statamic, I just handed over a Statamic site and the client was like, "Wow! This feels easy for me to update my content."

**Angie Herrera:** Right.

**Emily Lewis:** And that's always important to me.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, definitely.

**Emily Lewis:** So overall, especially because relatively speaking, you're in the beginning part of your WordPress development, how has your learning curve been compared with picking up EE or picking up Craft?

**Angie Herrera:** Well, actually, it's not a steep as it was 12 years ago, I don't even know how long it's been, 15 years ago, just because in ExpressionEngine, I work with ExpressionEngine for so many years now that I've had to go down through different rabbit holes. I'm much more comfortable in the database now. MySQL queries are like no big deal now. I mean, not that I could write one very quickly. It's just I know what to look for and I know how to Google. I mean, that's my biggest tool right there is Google, and so in addition to that, I've also picked up on PHP and so I'm able to read it a lot better. So because of that, because of my experience with ExpressionEngine, my learning curve with WordPress has actually shallowed out.

**Emily Lewis:** [Agrees]

**Angie Herrera:** And so that's big advantage, and so I think that's one of those things that developers are missing out on when they say they're only going to use WordPress or only going to use ExpressionEngine.

**Emily Lewis:** Right.



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**Angie Herrera:** Because these other systems can teach you so much.

**Lea Alcantara:** Yeah, for sure. I mean, I feel like right now I'm learning Twig a bit better for Craft, and like a lot of the things that I learned in EE still apply in terms of just logic, like just the idea of logic and idea of partials and templating. It might use a different syntax, but general ideas of content management is still the same.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, definitely.

**Emily Lewis:** Have you come across any really great learning resources or tools for WordPress?

**Angie Herrera:** Treehouse. Treehouse has a good series...

**Lea Alcantara:** Oh, interesting.

**Emily Lewis:** They have good content in general.

**Angie Herrera:** They do, they do, but there's one that teaches you how to extend and build out a strong WordPress site.

**Lea Alcantara:** Very cool.

**Emily Lewis:** You've touched on a little earlier about the WordPress community. We know you through EE, and in the earlier days of EE, there was just this wonderful exchange and sharing of information and helping people when you try to plug in or offering advice or whatever. Have you seen anything similar to that in the WordPress community?

**Angie Herrera:** I haven't, and part of that is just because I haven't really put myself out there in the WordPress community because if I'm brutally honest, I'm a little scared. [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]



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**Angie Herrera:** It's a little daunting partly because I think it's just my own stereotype of WordPress developers being WordPress for life, that sort of thing. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** And so that's a little daunting, and also, I mean, sometimes, once in a while, I've only done it a few times, but I'll put something out on Twitter, just like I would with EE or Craft, I'll ask for help with WordPress, and I usually end up with crickets, unless it's like I get replies that are like, "Hey, we could help you with your issue" versus if post a question for EE or Craft or even Statamic, then I usually get replies like it's very specific like, "Hey, have you tried this or have you tried that?"

With WordPress, it's been crickets or someone trying to sell me on hiring them, which was fine to a certain extent, but first I wanted to see if I can figure it out on my own with a little bit of help and nudging, and so that's been my experience so far. I'm hoping that that will change as we start to use WordPress more.

**Lea Alcantara:** I do think that experience might be a little bit different if you have, say, a lot of online—friends are real friends, they're real people—But because I have a few friends that do prefer WordPress or they are WordPress developers, the last time I did ask a WordPress question, they specifically answered. But nobody else that I didn't know, like I feel like when you ask a question to either for Craft or Statamic or EE, somebody you might not know will give you that specific answer, and then you become friends after that.

**Angie Herrera:** Right.



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**Emily Lewis:** I wonder if it's the hashtags or just followed closer within these smaller niche communities whereas maybe WordPress folks, it's just so massive to follow a #wordpress, which would be a ton of crap in your Twitter feed.

**Angie Herrera:** I think that's a big part of it for sure. Yeah, it's just a size thing. I mean, ExpressionEngine, the community, has grown. The Craft community has really grown, but they're still really small compared to WordPress, and so yeah, I think it is just a signal versus noise thing.

**Emily Lewis:** What's your best advice for anyone considering WordPress for project, and I mean this from like a developer perspective, not necessarily a client?

**Angie Herrera:** Well, sitemap, having a sitemap and planning is always important, but if WordPress is on the table, then it's important to really, really plan out what the goals of the site are and what the maintenance is going to be before committing to WordPress, just because it feels like WordPress can quickly end up like a Frankenstein site, like a Frankenstein CMS, if you're not careful, just because there are so many different plugins that claim to do the same thing, but there are some that are very good quality and then there are some that are not, or maybe you need to hack something in WordPress to get it to work right, and so all that planning and of course documenting is super important. I mean, I think that's global, regardless of what CMS you're using, but in WordPress, again, I'm not a super guru or anything, but I feel that that becomes much more critical because it's easy for a WordPress site to become this ugly monster.

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah, we actually had our transcriptionist, Joseph, he sent in a question about WordPress.

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]



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**Emily Lewis:** And he was wondering if it's generally, and he's not a developer, so I guess he's maintaining his own WordPress site, but he's wondering if it's okay to get the free themes that are offered on the internet. He's noticed that there are security concerns.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah.

**Emily Lewis:** Have you had any concerns yourself with that kind of stuff?

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, definitely. That's one of the things that, and it's an experience thing. I mean, I've been away from WordPress for so long that I don't know what the trusted resources, what the trusted themes are, and so I think there are probably some good free themes out there. Where they are, I don't know. I think it's one of those things where you have to do a little bit of research and figure it out or ask around. I mean, ask people who are very much more experienced in WordPress and ask them where the good free themes are. One thing that I know Nicole really, really has liked, there is this site called [underscores.me](http://underscores.me) where...

**Emily Lewis:** .ME?

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, .me, and basically, it's kind of like a developer theme. It's completely blank and it basically allows you to easily adopt whatever design you have for WordPress, to convert it into a WordPress theme, and I know like the Genesis Framework is huge, like it's super huge.

**Emily Lewis:** I always hear people talk about them.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah. Actually, I think I've played around with it, and it's pretty spectacular, so I think that that's something that people should look at.

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah, I think when you're talking about, I mean, really any of these systems, which Greg Aker brought up the other day is you need to keep them up to date because they're all going to be vulnerable to someone who's hell bent on hacking something.



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**Angie Herrera:** Yeah.

**Emily Lewis:** I think WordPress being as big as it is and as prolific as it is and as many of the free things that are out there that people have grabbed unknowingly, it's a ripe environment for there to be a malicious embedded code and things like that.

**Timestamp:** 00:40:09

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]

**Emily Lewis:** But it can happen with any of them, so the point is you've got to keep your systems up to date and you've got to be careful about what stuff you install in them.

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Emily Lewis:** And that's just really the bottom line regardless of what you're using.

**Angie Herrera:** Absolutely.

**Lea Alcantara:** Well, Angie, this was an amazing discussion, and it opened my mind, because I am one of those people who's like, "Hmm, curmudgeonly, I don't know about this WordPress thing that people are talking about."

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** [Laughs] Oh, I get that. I was like that for years too.

**Lea Alcantara:** But it's a good reminder that like use the right tool for the right reasons.

**Angie Herrera:** Right.

**Lea Alcantara:** Don't just choose something because it's the only thing you know per se.

**Angie Herrera:** Right.



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**Lea Alcantara:** It just might not necessarily be the right solution.

**Angie Herrera:** [Agrees]

**Lea Alcantara:** But before we finish up, we do have our Rapid Fire 10 Questions, so our listeners can get to know you a bit better.

**Angie Herrera:** All right.

**Lea Alcantara:** Are you ready?

**Angie Herrera:** I'm ready.

**Lea Alcantara:** Okay, first question, Android or iOS?

**Angie Herrera:** It's iOS.

**Emily Lewis:** If you are stranded on a desert island and can only bring three things, what would you bring?

**Angie Herrera:** Oh man, I'd probably bring a sketch book of some kind, music, some way to listen to music, and probably batteries so you could use it for that thing, I don't know. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara:** Very cool, so what's your favorite TV show?

**Angie Herrera:** Favorite TV show? Oh, *Walking Dead*. *The Walking Dead*, yeah.

**Emily Lewis:** What's your favorite dessert?

**Angie Herrera:** Tiramisu.



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**Lea Alcantara:** Nice. What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?

**Angie Herrera:** To attempt? Oh, wow, that's a good question. I'd probably want to attempt carpentry actually.

**Lea Alcantara:** Oh, cool.

**Emily Lewis:** What profession would you not like to try?

**Angie Herrera:** Anything in finance or accounting.

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** [Laughs] Yeah.

**Lea Alcantara:** What's the latest article or blog post you've read?

**Angie Herrera:** Let's see, what was the one that I read? It was one of the Focus Lab ones. Those guys are great. I just need...

**Emily Lewis:** Oh, was it the one Erik just put out about a contingency plan?

**Angie Herrera:** No, I think it was a different one. Actually, no, the one that I just read was their sales process one, that's what it was.

**Lea Alcantara:** Oh, I'm going to bookmark that one, yeah. [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** Yeah. [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** If you could have a super power, what would it be?

**Angie Herrera:** To be able to heal myself, kind of Wolverine.





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**Lea Alcantara:** Nice, right.

**Emily Lewis:** Oh right.

**Angie Herrera:** Except without the blades.

**Lea Alcantara:** [Laughs]

**Emily Lewis:** But that would be kind of cool too. [Laughs]

**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, it would be. [Laughs]

**Lea Alcantara:** What music do you like to work too?

**Angie Herrera:** Either jazz or like some down tempo electronic stuff.

**Emily Lewis:** All right, last question, cats or dogs?

**Angie Herrera:** Dogs.

**Lea Alcantara:** Very cool.

**Angie Herrera:** All right.

**Lea Alcantara:** That's all the time we have for today. Thanks for joining us, Angie.

**Angie Herrera:** Oh, thanks for having me. I've been having a good time.

**Emily Lewis:** Good. In case our listeners want to follow up with you, where they can find you online?

**Angie Herrera:** Well, on Twitter, I'm [@angieherrera](#), and let's see, at email, [angie@block81.com](mailto:angie@block81.com). Those are probably the two best ways to get a hold of me.

**Emily Lewis:** Awesome, great. It was so fun talking to you again. Thanks.



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**Angie Herrera:** Yeah, thank you.

[Music starts]

**Lea Alcantara:** We'd now like to thank our sponsors for this podcast: [Visual Chefs](#) and [Pixel & Tonic](#).

**Emily Lewis:** And thanks to our partners: [Arcustech](#), [Devot:ee](#) and [EE Insider](#).

**Lea Alcantara:** We also want to thank our listeners for tuning in! If you want to know more about CTRL+CLICK, make sure you follow us on Twitter [@ctrlclickcast](#) or visit our website, [ctrlclickcast.com](#). And if you liked this episode, please give us a review on [iTunes](#), [Stitcher](#) or both!

**Emily Lewis:** Don't forget to tune in to our next episode, John Rogerson returns to the show this time to geeky with web components. Be sure to check out our schedule on our site, [ctrlclickcast.com/schedule](#) for more upcoming topics.

**Lea Alcantara:** This is Lea Alcantara ...

**Emily Lewis:** And Emily Lewis ...

**Lea Alcantara:** Signing off for CTRL+CLICK CAST. See you next time!

**Emily Lewis:** Cheers!

[Music stops]

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