

Large Multisite Networks

Our experiences in Enterprise

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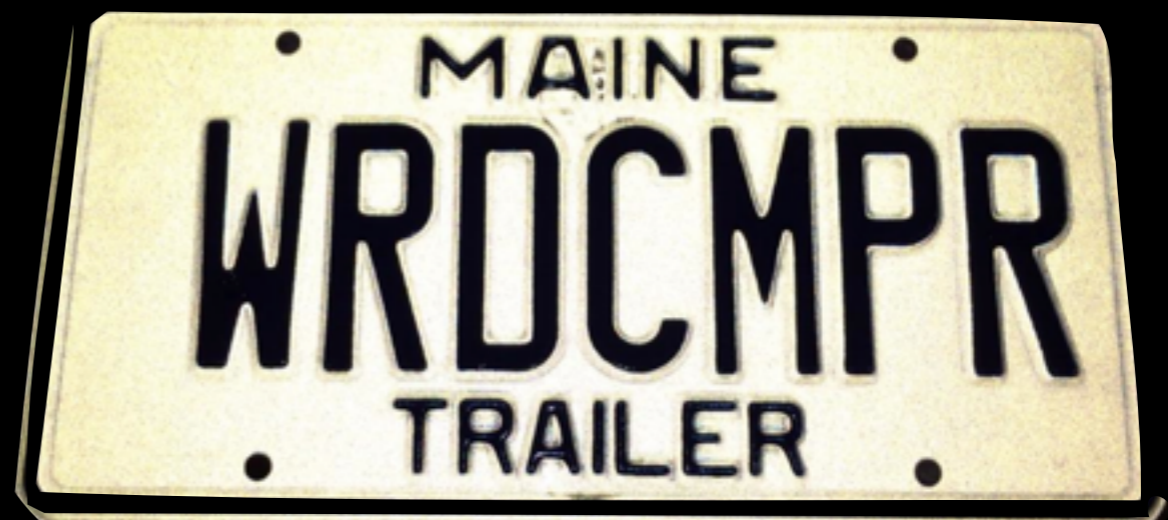
Notes available at <http://samhotchkiss.com/multisite>

Who am I?

Sam Hotchkiss

WordCamper

- Started coding in HyperCard in the early '90s
- PHP Dev since '97
- WP Dev since '06
- 4 months going to WordCamps...



Who am I?

Sam Hotchkiss

Leader of...

Hotchkiss
CONSULTING GROUP

A WordPress development agency with a knack for solving tough problems

We've built three large multisite networks, consulted on numerous others, and currently manage over 2,500 sites on two networks

 parka

A product development company with the goal of connecting websites to make the internet better

We build **BruteProtect**, a highly regarded WP Plugin that has blocked over 60 million malicious login attempts

Quick Definitions...

WordPress Multisite

Formerly WordPress Multi User, WordPress MU, WPMU

A multisite network is a collection of sites that all share the same WordPress installation. They can also share plugins and themes. The individual sites in the network are virtual sites in the sense that they do not have their own directories on your server, although they do have separate directories for media uploads within the shared installation, and they do have separate tables in the database.

-from codex.wordpress.org

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Large Multisite Network

Depends on your point of reference...

WordPress.com has 76m +

EduBlogs has 2m +

For the sake of discussion, let's call a Large Multisite Network any network with over 100 sites

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Let's Dive In...

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Is Multisite right for you?

Hint: Probably not

- Why do you want to use Multisite?
- What needs to be different from site-to-site?
 - Design? Functionality? Plugins?
- How much freedom do your users need?
- What are your SSL needs?

Advantages of Multisite...

- **Creation**
Easily create sites based on a template
- **Updates**
Easily create sites based on a template
- **Control**
You can easily curate plugins and themes
- **Management**
You only need one super admin account
- **Content**
Since you're sharing a DB, you can build tools to share content

Disadvantages of Multisite...

- **Plugin / Theme Restrictions**

You must be selective. You can't modify a theme for a single site without creating a new theme*

- **Security**

A vulnerability on one site is a vulnerability on all sites

- **Performance**

Optimizing multisite is crazy black magic. A multisite page load takes more resources than a single site page load.

- **SSL**

Make sure you can secure multiple front end domains before you promise it to your clients

* You have to create options / have a custom CSS area

Great use cases...

- Offering a website as part of a “complete business package”
- For divisions or employees of a single company
- Selling a customized solution to a well defined vertical (Ex: websites for mortgage brokers)
- Allowing multiple independent bloggers to create content around a common theme

**You've decided to use
Multisite, now what?**

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Tips and tricks 101

- **Be mindful of performance and bloat**
Don't activate a plugin or theme without reviewing EVERY LINE OF CODE. Test and watch things carefully. How many users do you have? An admin page load is exponentially more costly than a visitor.
- **Install BruteProtect**
I'm biased, but it's a must-have.
- **WPMU Dev has awesome tools**
They've done 90% of the work for you
- **Hire an awesome server admin**
You need a crazy server ninja if you're dealing with more than a few hundred sites.

Tips and tricks 201

- **Put as little functionality into your themes as possible**
Anything that might be applicable in multiple themes should be a plugin. Social network information, contact information, etc.
- **Use MU plugins strategically**
- **Use version control— potentially for the whole site (not just wp-content)**
- **Use the customizer, love the customizer**
But consider saving settings to `wp_options`, not `theme_mods`. Check out awesome talks from [@obenland](#) and [@mattwiebe](#)
- **Make smart decisions for your users**
“I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.” —Mark Twain

Code Example...

Pulling content from each blog into a main site

```
global $wpdb;
$blogs = $wpdb->get_results( "SELECT * FROM {$wpdb->blogs} where deleted = 0" );

if( is_array( $blogs ) ) : foreach( $blogs as $blog ) :

    switch_to_blog($blog->blog_id);

    $nmls = get_option( 'loan_officer_nmls' );
    $blog_user['name'] = get_option( 'loan_officer_name' );
    $blog_user['image'] = get_option( 'loan_officer_photo' );
    $blog_user['title'] = ucwords( get_option( 'loan_officer_title' ) );
    $branch_id = get_option( 'branch_id' );

    switch_to_blog( 1 );

    $staff = get_post_meta( $branch_id, 'staff', true );
    $staff[$nmls] = $blog_user;

    update_post_meta($branch_id, 'staff', $staff);

    echo 'Updated ' . $blog_user['name'] . '<br />';
endforeach; endif;
```

Business Tips...

- **This isn't going to be easy or cheap...**
Figure on a rough starting point of \$100k/year for a 1,000 site network for development, maintenance, hosting, etc.
- **Everything will take longer**
Development, testing, backups, updates.
- **If the client is cost sensitive, frame your costs through the lens of per-site cost**
\$100k sounds like a bunch of cash, \$100/site/year sounds like a bargain
- **Don't be afraid to suggest another solution**
Multisite is awesome and has many valid use cases, but don't try to shove a square peg into a round hole

Any Questions?

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