

WordPress is free, and the most expensive way to run a business website

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WordPress is free. It is also the most expensive way to run a business website.

The same site, three platforms, three years

14 pages, a 60-post blog, 25,000 monthly visits, no store, built in-house at 70 dollars an hour. 3-year total cost of ownership:

- Framer: 4,418 dollars.
- Webflow: 7,016 dollars.
- WordPress: 12,612 dollars.

Where the money actually goes

WordPress comes out at nearly 3x Framer. The subscription is 0 dollars. But plugin licenses and the time for updates, security, backups and the occasional broken plugin add up to 7,200 dollars over three years, with another 1,800 for the managed hosting the other two bundle in for free. That maintenance line alone is larger than the entire Framer total.

The monthly fee everyone argues about is the smallest number on the page. Build hours and maintenance are where the real cost hides.

The cost the 3-year total leaves out: getting back out

The model prices what it costs to run each platform, not what it costs to leave one. That gap runs the opposite way from the headline, and it is the thing WordPress buys with its higher running cost.

- Framer: no official way to export a working site or self-host it. The published site runs on Framer infrastructure, and the third-party exporters that exist produce only a static snapshot, so CMS-driven pages stop updating once you leave.
- Webflow: you can export HTML, CSS and JavaScript, but the export drops the CMS, forms, ecommerce and member areas. Collection lists render empty and forms stop submitting, so a content-driven Webflow site comes out as a static brochure, not the working site.
- WordPress: open source, and you hold the database and the files, so moving to another host is a migration rather than a rebuild. That portability is part of what the higher running cost pays for.

If there is a real chance you outgrow a hosted builder, or you want to own the stack outright,

factor a possible rebuild into the Framer or Webflow column. On a brochure or marketing site you never plan to move, that exit cost stays hypothetical and the lower three-year total stands.

Frequently asked questions

Is WordPress really cheaper than Webflow or Framer?

No. Modelled over three years for the same site (14 pages, a 60-post blog, 25,000 monthly visits, built in-house at 70 dollars an hour) it comes to about 12,612 dollars on WordPress versus 7,016 on Webflow and 4,418 on Framer. The free subscription is the smallest line.

Why is WordPress the most expensive website platform?

Because the real cost is plugin licenses plus the hours for updates, security, backups and the occasional breakage, not the 0-dollar subscription. Those push WordPress to nearly 3x the three-year cost of Framer.

Can you move a Framer or Webflow site somewhere else later?

Not as a working site. Framer has no official export or self-hosting, and its third-party exporters produce only a static snapshot, so CMS pages stop updating once you leave. Webflow can export HTML, CSS and JavaScript, but the export drops the CMS, forms, ecommerce and member areas, so a content-driven site comes out as a static brochure. WordPress is open source and portable, so moving it is a migration rather than a rebuild. That lock-in is a cost the 3-year subscription total does not show.

Model your own 3-year cost

Free, no signup: agent.mue.app/tools/website-platform-tco-calculator

agent.mue.app/articles/webflow-vs-wordpress-vs-framer-3-year-cost

