

PART I OF WPCNX DECEMBER 2025 MEETUP

How to **Fail** an Agency

7 Unsuccessful Ways to Build a
Remote WordPress Agency

by Jef van de Graaf™

MY TRUE GOAL

This is for you 🙌

I just want to teach you how to build a
successful WordPress agency.*

*本当に

I WANT YOU TO NOT FAIL

Because...


..offering WordPress as a Service is a complex beast but it can be systematized into a highly profitable career 🤪.

CAN WE START THE TALK ALREADY? GEEZ...

My final-legit_final7.png disclaimer:

 I don't sell courses.

 I have absolutely nothing to sell you.

 There's no affiliate links for your to click on so I can afford my Khao Soi addiction.



LazMall BC Mini LED Digital Programmable Rechargeable Scrolling Name Message Tag Sign



★★★★★ 4.8(43)

Brand: BUYINCOINS | More Gifts & Wrapping from BUYINCOINS

฿180.94 ~~฿299.00~~ -39%

\$5.65 USD

Promotions: ฿17 Buy 4, Get 3% off; Buy 6, Get 4% off; Buy 10, Get 5...

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Return & Warranty: 100% Authentic · This item is non-returnable · Warranty not available >

Color family: Red Blue White

Quantity:

[Buy Now](#)

**NOT AN AFFILIATE,
JUST A
MUST-HAVE NAME
TAG FOR EVENTS**

Share Like



WHO IS ME?

- I have an honours Biomedical sciences degree from the University of Waterloo
- In 2014, I sold all my belongings and bought a one ticket to Tokyo.
- I cycled across Japan and became a private English teacher (earnings \$5K to \$6K a working 40 hrs / mth)
- I eliminated my student debt and saved another \$15K
- I sold introductions to my students and partied in Okinawa with my "exit" money.
- Then, I moved to New Taipei City in Taiwan...
- And this is where my talk actually begins.

FAILURE #1:

Not committing to WordPress.

“If you want to fail, spend years platform-hopping instead of mastering the one ecosystem that prints money.”

FAILURE #1: NOT COMMITTING TO WORDPRESS

The fact is:

All businesses need a website.

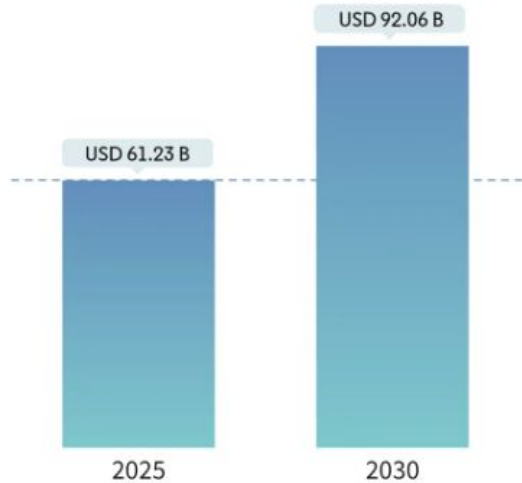
Those saying otherwise are probably, 99.9% scammers.

Oh, and fun fact...

Web Design Market

Market Size in USD Billion

CAGR 8.5%



Source : Mordor Intelligence



Study Period

2019 - 2030

Market Size (2025)

USD 61.23 Billion

Market Size (2030)

USD 92.06 Billion

CAGR (2025 - 2030)

8.50%

Fastest Growing Market

Asia Pacific

Largest Market

North America

Market Concentration

Low



We all know:

- WordPress powers about 43% of all websites worldwide (as of 2025).

So, theoretically...

- WordPress-built sites might represent US \$20–30 billion

FAILURE #1: NOT COMMITTING TO WORDPRESS

Every platform promises:

- *"It's easier."*
- *"It's faster."*
- *"It's more modern."*
- *"It'll save you time."*
- *"Your clients will love it."*
- *"No plugins! No updates! No maintenance! Magic!"*
- *"You'll never need WordPress again."*

The issues are:

- You never develop real confidence.
- You're always second-guessing your recommendations.
- Your skills won't compound.
- You feel like an impostor even when you're capable.
- You delay your own growth.

What I love about WP:

- The freedom to create
- Total ownership (and the ability to transfer said ownership)
- An investment in a long-term, sustainable, self-made business model
- Genuine expert status (i.e., me as the new WP event organizer of Chiang Mai)

FAILURE #2:

**Not knowing what
you're selling.**

**"Being good at the work doesn't
mean you're good at selling it."**

Performance:

1. Page speed
2. Hosting reliability
3. CDN
4. Caching
5. Image optimization
6. JS/CSS optimization
7. Core Web Vitals
8. Mobile responsiveness

Copywriting:

9. Positioning
10. Value props
11. Message hierarchy
12. Voice & tone
13. Calls to action
14. Narrative flow
15. Objection handling
16. Clarity (no jargon)

SEO:

17. Keywords
18. Search intent
19. Metadata
20. URL structure
21. Schema
22. Internal linking
23. Backlinkable content
24. Technical health (sitemaps, robots, indexing)
25. NAP consistency
26. Topical authority mapping
27. Keyword clustering
28. 404 strategy & redirect mapping
29. Reputation & brand queries

FAILURE #2: NOT KNOWING WHAT YOU'RE SELLING

Design:

30. Visual hierarchy
31. Spacing
32. Typography
33. Color systems
34. Accessibility
35. Conversion UX (above-fold clarity, CTA placement)
36. Scannability
37. Interaction patterns
38. Brand consistency
39. Device breakpoints
40. Component reuse
41. Form design
42. Logo usage rules
43. Photography

FAILURE #2: NOT KNOWING WHAT YOU'RE SELLING

That last slide didn't even take into consideration the complexity of WooCommerce / online shopping.

"Hey, maybe a 9 to 5 ain't that bad afterall..."

FAILURE #3:

Don't be a “Jef” of all trades

“This... is so embarrassing.”



BLOG

WHAT WE DO

WHO WE ARE

TALK TO US

 Digital Marketing Services

DIGITAL MARKETING SERVICES

EVERYTHING YOU NEED (**AND MORE**) TO **SUCCEED** ONLINE

September 4th, 2018

TRAFFIC HANDLING

 TRAFFIC BOOST

 PPC ADVERTISING

 SEO SERVICES

LEAD GENERATION

 EMAIL MARKETING

 LANDING PAGES

 SALES FUNNELS

CONVERSION OPTIMIZATION

 A/B TESTING

 ADVANCED ANALYTICS

 WEBSITE AUDIT

CREATIVE STUFF

 WEB DESIGN

 CREATIVE CONTENT

 GUERRILLA MARKETING

September 4th, 2018

FAILURE #3: DON'T BE A "JEF" OF ALL TRADES

OOPS, TOO MANY OPTIONS? TALK TO US

September 4th, 2018



A FEW QUICK TIPS

- Pick one problem you want to solve — and get exceptional at solving it.
- Niche by audience or by deliverable.
- Create one repeatable offer before adding anything else.

SIDE NOTE:

Under the Thai Playing Cards Act, it's technically illegal to possess more than 120 playing cards without a government license.

FAILURE #4:

Pricing websites incorrectly.

"If there's a wrong way to price a website... I've done it."

FAILURE #4: PRICING WEBSITES INCORRECTLY

Job details

Website Design and Development

Full Stack Development Invite Only

Build website and misc services as outlined in the attached proposal - excluding hosting services.

[View job posting](#)

 Expert
Experience level

 \$1,200
Fixed-price

**For a 20+ page website, including:
Design, SEO, and copywriting.**

When the client knows exactly what they want:

- They already have a budget.
- They already have a scope in mind.
- They already have assets ready.
- They think the project is execution, not strategy.

Which simply asks you to decide:

- Is this worth your time?
- Do you need the money?

When no one is really in control:

- They “kinda” know what they want.
- You “kinda” understand the scope.
- The brief is half-baked (and made with AI).
- The budget is “flexible... kinda.”
- Expectations are vague.
- You both think it’ll be simple (*but it never is*).

Which results in::

- Faster burnout
- Drag-on projects
- Terrible margins

When the client comes to you for your expertise:

- They’re looking for guidance.
- They trust your process.
- They want clarity, not assumptions.
- You define the scope, the plan, the outcome.
- Pricing is tied to expertise, not deliverables.

Which often leads to:

- Higher earnings
- Smoother projects
- Best clients



FAILURE #4: PRICING WEBSITES INCORRECTLY

If you really want to understand pricing...

The Psychology of Pricing

WORDPRESS EDITION

by Brian Rotztein

FAILURE #5:

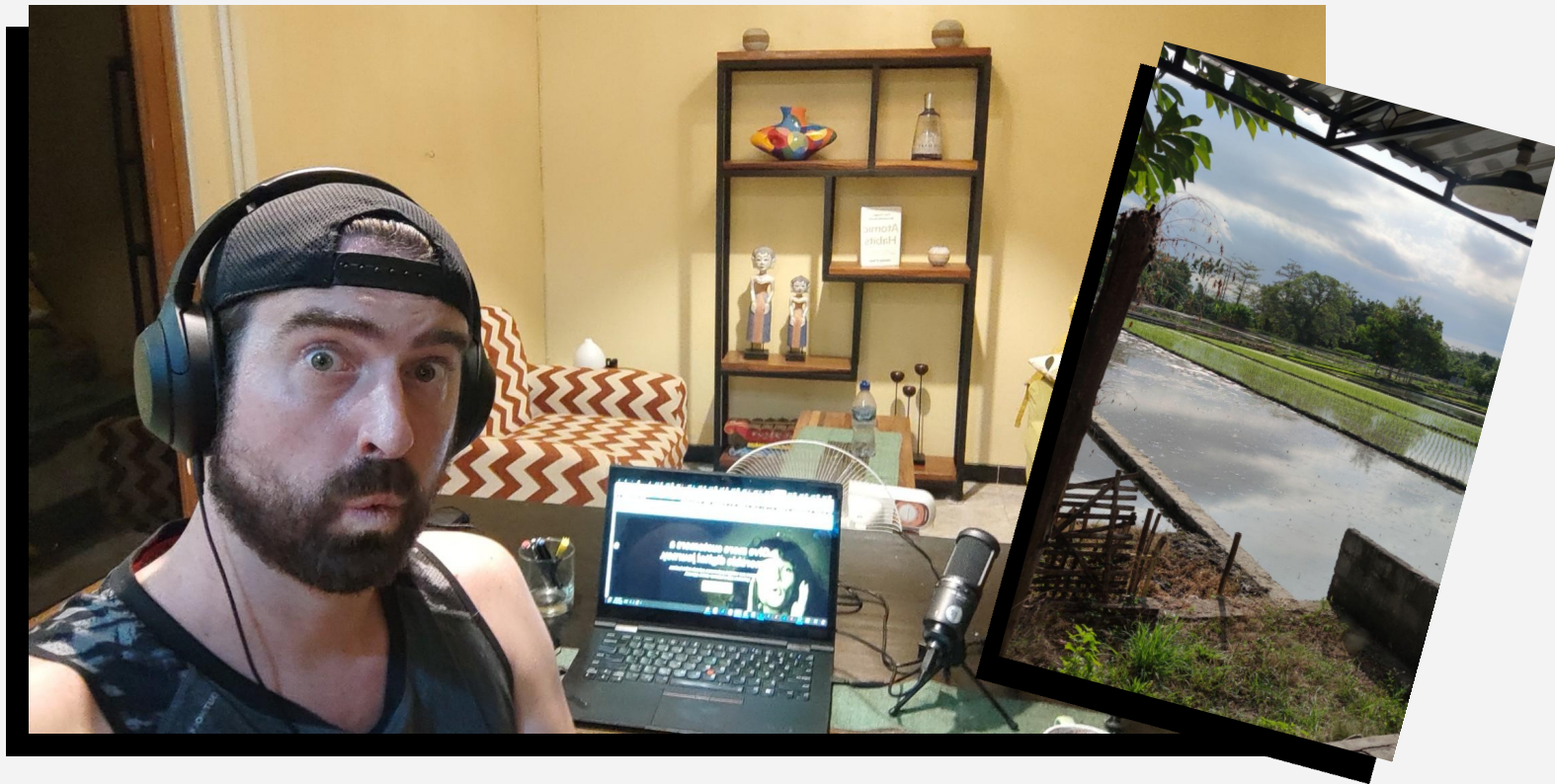
**Never build an agency where
you should be on holiday.**

“I got deported for making this mistake...”

FAILURE #5: INDONESIA = A FUN TIME ≠ NOT BUSINESS TIME



FAILURE #5: INDONESIA = A FUN TIME ≠ NOT BUSINESS TIME



FAILURE #6:

Trusting the Wrong Strategic Partners

**“Did you know? Partnerships aren’t friendships.
One is business. The other is brunch.”**

FAILURE #6:

As you grow your agency clients will lean on you to solve more problems which will be outside your area of expertise.

FAILURE #6:

And when that happens, you either outsource or you surround yourself with a network of specialists you actually trust.

FAILURE #6:



But, wait!
Who can you trust?

Red Flags in Strategic Partnerships

- Asking for referrals but never giving any back
- Dodging conversations about money or percentages
- Overpromising, underdelivering
- Poor communication or slow responses
- Blaming “their team” when things go wrong
- Quietly outsourcing your referrals without telling you
- Ghosting once they’ve collected their piece
- Using you to elevate their reputation with no reciprocity
- Protecting their margins more than the client relationship
- Wanting to look collaborative without actually collaborating

Green Flags in Strategic Partnerships

- Clear expectations around scope, timelines, and money
- A genuine desire to make you look good to your clients
- Open, proactive communication Shared incentives — wins feel mutual
- Transparency about process, limitations, and bandwidth
- A willingness to hop on calls and solve problems together
- Respect for the client relationship you bring to the table
- Warm intros, not cold handoffs
- Consistent professionalism (no surprises)
- Referrals that actually flow both directions

FAILURE #7:

Believing failure is permanent

“Do you prefer gouda or cheddar cheese?”