WPengine®

CASE STUDY

SongTown

Agency
Ah So Designs

Client Site
members.songtown.com/login

Challenge
Slow backend, technicalities faced with moving client website to PHP 7

Results
Easy transition to PHP 7 with help of PHP Compatibility Checker plugin, no more user complaints regarding slow backend

"Before we moved to WP Engine, other services would love to handle our problems or questions by saying 'it's not their issue.' WP Engine just fixes it."

- Clay Mills
Co-founder, SongTown

A Finely Tuned Site: Smoothly Sailing Into PHP 7

SLOW BACKEND COMPLAINTS DRIVE SONGTOWN, AH SO DESIGNS TO MAKE NEW TRANSITIONS

The Company

SongTown provides the ultimate online songwriter experience for songwriters and artists. Their website, *songtown.com*, supports a positive community of songwriters to give creative people the encouragement, inspiration, and coaching to grow in their craft.

Ah So Designs (*ahsodesigns.com*) is a WordPress design and development agency based in Nashville. Since 2008 they've worked with a wide range of clients — small and large, national and global, in a breadth of industries, including education, entertainment, industrial, financial, start ups, and professional athletes.

The Challenge

PHP is a coding languange that powers over 80 percent of the web. Although its latest version, PHP 7, is making big waves for WordPress — due to its serious performance improvements — so far the transition has been slow. Because there are still incompatibilities among themes, plugins, and various code, the transition has been a cautious one due to PHP 7's backward incompatibility. Making the switch without detecting these incompatibilities in advance could mean major issues for your website.

Ah So Designs has been working to move a number of their clients to PHP 7 for the added speed and memory consumption benefits. Sites that move to PHP 7 can expect to experience performance gains anywhere between 25-70 percent.

The agency's client, SongTown, was experiencing constant user complaints regarding their membership backend moving slow (members.songtown.com/login). According to Ah So Design's President, John Housholder, "We advised them that there wasn't a lot we could do to speed up the membership portion of the site. Our code was clean. When WP Engine announced they now supported PHP 7, SongTown was excited to test the transition!"

The Solution

To reap the benefits of improved site performance, Ah So Designs decided to move SongTown's membership site from PHP 5.6 to PHP 7. They talked to SongTown about the benefits of upgrading to PHP 7, referencing WP Engine's support documentation.

"We set expectations for them that this [moving to PHP 7] is like pulling up the hood of your car. Most of the time everything is fine, but sometimes your car needs some fine-tuning to help it run better," he said.

With the help of WP Engine's PHP Compatibility Checker plugin, they were able to detect any incompatibility issues with SongTown's membership site and diagnose any actual bugs within the code.

"Most of the time, there was not any issues with buggy code, however if there was, it was easy to fix. We also reached out to the plugin author and found that an update to the plugin was coming soon," said Housholder. "We tested the site on staging and reached out to the WP Engine support team when needed. They always have your back!"

Housholder further elaborated why he prefers WP Engine, noting his favorite features to include the platform's security benefits and daily automatic backups. "In the unlikely event we were hacked, WP Engine will fix it for free. Also, with large amounts of transactional and customer data, it is very important that if the site went down during this transition to PHP 7, there would be a peace of mind knowing their data would not be lost and the site could be restored immediately."

The Results

After pushing SongTown's membership site to live on PHP 7, there have been no more complaints from them or their users regarding a slow moving backend. According to Housholder, "The site is moving a lot faster now!"

Clay Mills, Co-founder of SongTown added, "Before we moved to WP Engine, other services would love to handle our problems or questions by saying 'it's not their issue.' WP Engine just fixes it!"

About WP Engine

WP Engine powers amazing digital experiences for websites or applications built on WordPress. The company's premium managed hosting platform provides the performance, reliability and security required by the biggest brands in the world, while remaining affordable and intuitive enough for smaller businesses and individuals. Companies large and small rely on WP Engine's award-winning customer service team that specializes in quickly solving technical problems, and creating a world-class customer experience. Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas, Limerick, Ireland, and London, England.