TORQUE®

8 KEY SECURITY QUESTIONS
YOUR HOSTING COMPANY
SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER

BY JOHN HUGHES

WHITE PAPER

WPengine®

We're living in something of a golden age when it comes to hosting websites, particularly when it comes to working with WordPress. It's simply never been easier to quickly and affordably get online and manage every aspect of your own site.

*Though the industry as a whole has come on in leaps and bounds, all hosting companies are still very much **not** the same when it comes to security. There's also no shortage of bad guys out there, so it's a topic you need to keep on top of.*

In this piece, we'll help you make sure your site is as locked down as possible by stepping through eight questions which any hosting company who's genuinely serious about security should be more than happy to answer. Step through them when you're next on the hunt for hosting, and you should be able to narrow the field in short order.

1. How Long Have You Been in Business?

Though great new hosts are springing into life every month, it's not an area where you want someone else to be learning the basics of the business on your dime – particularly when it comes to security.

Ideally, you're looking for a hosting partner who's already reliably delivered top-tier services to thousands of happy customers for a number of years, and on a profitable basis.

2. What Does the Profile of the Management Team Look Like?

With the number of reseller options and infrastructural services such as Amazon Web Services floating around these days, it's surprisingly easy for pretty much any regular Joe to launch themselves in the hosting business if they've got enough gumption and available capital.

As the old Italian saying goes, the fish rots from the head. You want to be certain that the people at the top of your potential hosting partner's org chart are genuine technologists with a proven track record of taking security seriously. Don't just stick to researching this one online, actually ask about it. Any reticence, vagueness, or confusion here about answering is a reliable indicator you should run a mile.

3. What Does the Technology Stack Look Like?

As a site owner, you don't necessarily have to understand the technical underpinnings of the entire hosting stack from a security point of view.

Your hosting partner, however, should be more than capable of walking you through it on demand, and pointing out what each moving part is responsible for.

4. Do You Have a Documented Disaster Recovery Plan in Place?

Serious hosting companies are painfully aware that the world is an unpredictable place, and plan accordingly. Though you'll hopefully never have to see it in action, any professional hosting company worth its salt should have a written disaster recovery plan in place that will address exactly what happens in the event of a major security incident or any other type of disaster.

For the vast majority of sites, you don't need to pore over this document in detail, but you do need to know that it's there. Again, any type of hesitancy or bluster in response to this question is an excellent sign you should be taking your business elsewhere.

5. Where Can I Read About Your Security Policies?

In addition to having a clear idea of what the underlying technology stack is, you also want a detailed breakdown of what active security policies and measures are also in place. Naturally, you'll expect your hosting partner to be able to talk you through this intelligibly, but you also want to see a commitment to easily accessible online documentation.

6. How Can We Partner on Security?

Not only should your hosting company have clear documentation on their security policies, but they should also be able to tell you how they can partner with you on security. After all, security is a shared responsibility.

Your host should be able to tell you how they can proactively protect your site. This means taking the extra steps needed to keep your site and your business secure by continuously auditing and making security recommendations that only you can implement.

7. Have You Suffered a Recent Attack? Where Can I Read About It?

The first thing to point out here is that every host is under more or less constant attack. If the answer to the first part of this question is "No," be very suspicious indeed. Ideally, what you're looking for here is a clear and public example of a host responding to an actual security incident in a professional and timely manner.

It's all too easy for hosts to say how they would react in a crisis, you want to see how they already have.

8. How Can You Convince Me Your Security Setup is World Class?

You'll naturally be doing a fair bit of poking around and due diligence on your own when you're assessing your potential provider's commitment to security. Make sure you also explicitly ask them to sell you on it while you're at it, however.

Any host who's really on the ball about security should welcome the opportunity to go deep on the topic with a potential customer. Contact a provider and they should be able to take you through the basics of specific items such as malware protection, monitoring and logging while making a solid general case for their services.

Conclusion

Security is the one area of hosting where you just can't afford to cut corners or take chances, so you have to be prepared to ask the right questions up front. Let's recap our eight suggested security queries to close things out:

1. How long have they been around?

2. How experienced is the management team?

3. What does the technology stack look like?

4. Do they have a disaster recovery plan in place?

5. Are their security policies clearly listed?

6. How can they partner with me on security?

7. Have they successfully dealt with previous security incidents?

8. Can they sell their own services?

There are naturally plenty of other questions that will arise during your search, but the eight above should help you narrow the field pretty quickly.

Secure hosting with WP Engine addresses many of the above questions with its proprietary security technology. Check out WP Engine's plans to find out more about their security benefits.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
JOHN HUGHES

John is part of the writing team over at WordCandy.co. He's a blogging addict, a WordPress fanatic, and loves nothing more than helping others around the world understand the intricacies of WordPress! You can get in touch with him via WordCandy.co.

About Torque

Torque is a news site featuring all things WordPress. We are dedicated to informing new and advanced WordPress professionals, users, and enthusiasts about the industry. Torque focuses primarily on WordPress News, Business, and Development, but also covers topics relating to open source and breakthrough technology. Torque made its debut in July 2013, at WordCamp San Francisco, and has since produced valuable content that reflects the evolution of WordPress, both as a platform and a community. Torque is a WP Engine publication, though maintains complete editorial independence. torquemag.io
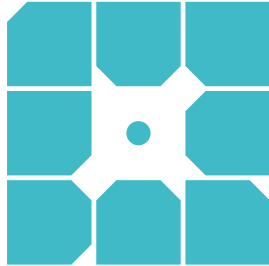
About WP Engine

WP Engine powers amazing digital experiences for websites and 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 of all sizes rely on WP Engine's award-winning customer service team to quickly solve technical problems and create 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.