



Customer Q&A.

Taking the Holiday Leap with WP Engine.



Industry
Sport and Recreation

Site
www.iflyworld.com

iFLY is a sports and recreation company that's mission is to deliver the dream of flight. The company pioneered the body flying experience and is the world leader in vertical wind tunnel technology.

iFly opened its first wind tunnel in 1998 with the dream of empowering humans to experience the freedom and thrill of flying. Since opening, iFLY has flown more than 10 million people of all ages (from 3 to 103) and all abilities.

With more than 80 locations, iFly has become wildly popular around the globe, and the holiday rush—beginning around Black Friday and running through the end of the year—is a particularly busy time for the company's website. Reservations, gift purchases, and a massive uptick in site traffic have made it iFly's busiest time of the year, and the company's digital team has had to make adjustments in recent years just to keep up with the high traffic and demand.

To find out more about how the company handles the holiday rush, as well as the relationship they've built with WP Engine, we sat down with iFly's Director of Digital Experience, Max Solodky, to dive in a little bit deeper.

Let's begin with your web presence. Why is your website important for business?

Our website is our number one channel for educating and communicating with customers. It's also our eCommerce engine, so ultimately, we want customers to use the website to complete transactions: schedule their visits and purchase an offering or a product. The site is usually the first thing customers are exposed to, so it has to be professional, it has to be up and running at all times, and it has to load quickly.

Was the site always built on WordPress or did you start with a different Content Management System (CMS)?

The site was originally built on a proprietary CMS and hosted through a third-party cloud provider. As our web presence grew and we started getting more and more traffic, we began experiencing issues with outages and slow loading times. We found ourselves spending a lot of time troubleshooting

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and searching for root causes, and eventually, we decided to look for another option.

Is that what led you to WP Engine?

Yes. When we were looking at the various providers out there, we found that WP Engine had all the components we required already implemented into their platform. So, after doing a lot of research, we decided it would be better to go with WP Engine versus another provider, or building everything internally.

Why is the holiday rush such a popular season for you?

Just like many other retailers, the time from Thanksgiving through Christmas is a huge rush for us. More people come to our site to buy gift certificates and we run a lot of promotions that drive traffic through the website: emails, social campaigns, etc. It's become our most important time of year from a revenue perspective.

What is your preparation process like for that big rush? When do you start getting ready and what types of things do you do?

We typically begin getting ready in August or early September, with the goal of being completely ready by the end of October. For us, the performance of every single web page is important because it has a direct correlation to conversions, so we do a lot of research and a lot of testing prior

to our peak season to make sure we're fully prepared.

How does WP Engine play a role in those preparations? What about during the rush itself?

Beyond helping us optimize our site for higher traffic, our team at WP Engine has been specifically helpful with regards to the load testing we do. We work with a third-party company that does load testing for us and one of the areas where WP Engine has been great is working together with that third-party provider to help us get the most out of our load testing process.

During the peak season itself though, we have ongoing support from our WP Engine team which is really invaluable. Knowing they're standing at the ready to help us if anything goes wrong has been huge for us.

How did that come about? Was your team at WP Engine always on standby or was that something you set up specifically?

A couple of years ago, we actually did experience an outage. It was very brief, and having WP Engine as our partner made it an easy situation to fix—we simply scaled up and we were back online almost immediately. But since then, we've worked even closer with our team at WP Engine to make sure we're staying ahead of those issues.

This past holiday rush, our WP Engine team worked really closely with us in

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terms of monitoring, scaling up, and just being proactive. It went really well, everything stayed up, and we ended up having one of our best seasons in terms of revenue.

You recently completed a rebrand of your site. What spurred that on and what sort of role did WP Engine play in that process?

We did relaunch our site in April, mainly because we wanted a style refresh and our marketing team was introducing new messaging into market. Rebranding and relaunching websites is not something you can just do overnight, and so it involved a lot of people from our own internal teams, as well as our team at WP Engine.

We built the new site in-house, but once we were ready to launch it, WP Engine played a huge role in helping us get it live. Similar to the way they’ve advised us with regards to server load during our peak traffic times, our WP Engine team was on hand to advise and keep an eye on everything, as we rolled out the new site.

Now that the site is live, everyone is extremely happy with it and it’s been a big success for us—in the short time since it launched, we’ve already seen better conversion rates and more time on site, and I expect those trends to continue to increase.

What sort of plans do you have for the future? How do you see WP Engine playing a role?

When it comes to iFly and WP Engine, we have some ambitious growth plans. One of the biggest is to make one global site where everybody will visit, regardless of what country they’re in or what location they’re looking for. Ultimately, we want to make sure that our website, the marketing website, and the eCommerce side of it as well, is accessible and high performing across the globe. That’s an extremely important imperative for us over the coming years, and I don’t see us doing it without our team at WP Engine.

WP Engine fast facts.

Founded in 2010 | 120K+ Customers in 136 Countries | Supporting 500K+ WordPress Domains
Serving 2B Page Views/Day | Largest Customer Success Team in WordPress, Available 24/7/365