# PAGELY®

## We help Big Brands, Scale WordPress.
WORDPRESS HOSTING MANAGED BY PROFESSIONALS

PAGELY, INC
pagely.com

**QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SHOPPING HOSTS**

# HOW TO VET YOUR HOST
GET THE ANSWERS YOU NEED TO MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION

As you know, many different hosting options exist. Hosting companies adjust several levers to produce their offerings. These levers include:

**Flexibility**

**Security**

**Speed**

**Support**

**Transparency**

**Price**

When running at scale, additional items such as reliability and durability are also added to the mix.

Many hosts brag about speed and support while letting robust security and transparency fall short. Some boast about flexibility and price but lack reliability and durability. Sadly, some even sell you the whole package but deliver only false promises.

We believe the underrepresentation of these levers has contributed to mistrust in the market of the hosting industry. At Pagely, we strive to change the status quo.

## This guide will help you to:

- **Determine which levers are essential to your business.**

- **Provide you with questions that will help you to determine how a hosting provider aligns with your unique business needs.**

- **Gain confidence in your ability to choose a host that truly fits your needs — protecting you against the multitude of bait-and-switch tactics that could be used against you.**

# GENERAL QUESTIONS
GOOD TO KNOW

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| How long have you been in business? | |
| Notes: | |
| Is your company primarily B2C or B2B? | |
| | |
| Is your platform built on cloud-based infrastructure? If so, are all critical components within the same cloud provider? | |
| | |
| Of the dozens of competing options for Managed WordPress hosting, what makes your company unique? | |
| | |
| Can you point me to where I can find independently-verified (non-affiliate) customer reviews? | |
| | |
| What do you most enjoy about working at this company? | |
| | |
| May we see your insurance documents and applicable coverage amounts? Do you carry Errors & Omissions (E&O) and Professional Liability coverage? | |
| | |

# QUESTIONS ON RELIABILITY
RELIABILITY MEANS THAT YOUR SITE/DATA IS ACCESSIBLE.

The goal of these questions is to gauge the provider's commitment to reliability and expected uptime of the platform. Quality answers will cite well-documented processes and policies.

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| What is your guaranteed uptime? May I see your SLA? | |
| Notes: | |
| Will my database and websites be on the same virtual machine/instance? What happens when one or both fail? | |
| | |
| How do you solve for the noisy neighbor problem? | |
| | |
| How does your platform handle burst-able or viral traffic spikes? | |
| | |
| Regarding a datacenter outage, how are your availability zones set up? Do you offer HA (high-availability) solutions to mitigate against disruption? | |
| | |
| Describe your crisis protocol for addressing a widespread platform outage. | |
| | |
| Do you have a Disaster Recovery (DR) process documented? May I see it? | |
| | |
| How often do you "Game-Day" or test your DR recovery processes? What are your Recovery Point Objective (RPO) and Recovery Time Objective (RTO) targets? | |
| | |
| Do you offer proactive site monitoring? What are the common alert triggers, and what is the process for resolving a triggered alert? | |
| | |

# QUESTIONS ON FLEXIBILITY
FLEXIBILITY MEANS THE BREADTH OF FEATURES FOR UNIQUE SITES

The goal of these questions is to understand the provider's capabilities and willingness to adapt to your specific needs. Ask any other questions that pertain to your particular use-case.

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| Do you offer built-in DNS/CDN/WAF solutions? May I use my preferred provider? | |
| Notes: | |
| May we use our existing software deployment/integration workflows? Will you help us integrate them into your platform? | |
| | |
| What is the process of scaling up if we need additional performance resources? How quickly are we able to scale up if we need to? | |
| | |
| Are we able to leverage containers, Elasticsearch, custom database types, or other types of services/technologies if we need them? | |
| | |
| How flexible is your page caching system? Are we able to tune the default caching behavior for our specific needs, such as session tracking, e-commerce, or UTM parameters? | |
| | |
| Is your Web Application Gateway layer capable of custom routing or cache rules specific to our needs? | |
| | |
| Do you provide any performance monitoring tools? Can we use Grafana or some other server performance monitoring tool? | |
| | |
| Which types of databases may we use? | |
| | |
| Can we set up custom status monitoring and alert notifications for our website? | |
| | |

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| Are any API endpoints made available to help us manage our sites and account? | |
| | |
| Can I test plugin updates before pushing them live? | |
| | |

# QUESTIONS ON SECURITY/DATA PRIVACY

FEATURES AND CONTROLS PROVIDING PREVENTION, CLEANUP, MITIGATION, AND GUIDANCE

The goal of these questions is to understand the provider's security philosophy. When asking these questions, look for answers that demonstrate internal capabilities and a commitment to protecting the data, privacy, and integrity of your website.

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| Do you handle incident response in-house or outsource to a third party? Are there extra fees for remediation? | |
| Notes: | |
| Does your web application firewall (WAF) allow for custom rule sets that are unique to our needs? | |
| | |
| Do you have limits on the number of super admin accounts? | |
| | |
| May we see your Data Privacy / Transparency report? | |
| | |
| Do you offer or enforce 2FA (two-factor authentication) on the control panel and other critical systems? | |
| | |
| Do you offer brute force and weak password protection on your control panel? What about my hosted WordPress site(s)? | |
| | |
| When migrating to your platform, do you scan incoming sites for malware or known security issues? What if my site is found to be compromised or vulnerable during the migration? | |
| | |
| Do you handle WordPress core and plugin updates for me? How are those updates managed? | |

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| | |
| Please describe your internal process for kernel and package updates as they pertain to security-related patches. | |
| | |
| How often do you run malware or vulnerability scans across hosted sites? | |
| | |
| Do you allow for modifications to WordPress core files? | |
| | |
| Does your account system allow for granular permissions for our employees and contractors to access our account with limited privileges? | |
| | |
| What additional security hardening do you perform? | |
| | |
| Do you allow us to perform penetration tests against our sites on your platform? What is the procedure to do so? | |
| | |
| How does your security team handle known vulnerabilities if a patch doesn't exist yet? | |
| | |
| What is the MTTR (Mean Time to Repair) for an infected or defaced site? | |
| | |
| What is the MTTP (Mean Time to Patch) for WordPress core, themes, plugins, and server software? | |
| | |

# QUESTIONS ON DURABILITY
## DURABILITY MEANS THAT YOU WON'T LOSE DATA

Most disasters can be recovered from — as long as there is a clean, recent backup. These questions will help you to gain a better understanding of how durable the hosting provider is.

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| How many nines are in your data durability guarantee? | |
| Notes: | |
| Do you offer backups? How frequently are backups performed? Where are they located? | |
| | |
| How long do you retain archived backups? Can I make that longer? | |
| | |
| Am I able to replicate backups to our private storage solution? Will you help me do that? | |
| | |
| How is my site restored from a backup? Can you walk me through that process? | |
| | |

# QUESTIONS ON SPEED/PERFORMANCE
SPEED MEANS THE TIME IT TAKES FOR PAGES TO RENDER

Cache is king — especially when serving high volumes of traffic. However, how your site implements caching and whether the underlying platform can handle dynamic requests effectively, truly determines how your website performs.

| Question | Pass/Fail |
| --- | --- |
| Will my database and site be on the same virtual machine/instance? | |
| Notes: | |
| Please describe your various caching layers/mechanisms. | |
| | |
| Are you okay with a large number of WordPress plugins? How will that impact my site's overall performance? | |
| | |
| What is your preferred method of scaling for increased dynamic request performance — vertically or horizontally? | |
| | |
| We understand that it is optimal to leverage page caching as much as possible. In the situations when we need to process dynamic requests, what lower-level optimizations does your platform provide? | |
| | |
| What caching technologies does your platform use (Varnish, NGINX, Redis, ElastiCache, etc.)? Are the configurations platform-wide, or can they be customizable to our specific needs? Will you help us to perform those optimizations? | |
| | |
| How many Points of Presence (POPs) are do you include in your CDN offering? | |
| | |

# QUESTIONS ON SUPPORT

THE SUPPORT TEAM'S ABILITY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS PROMPTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL ESCALATION

Understand the capabilities and expertise level of the provided support. Are they proactive or reactive? Is the agent that is handling your case in a level 1 call center? Will you have a dedicated engineer?

| Question | Pass/Fail |
| --- | --- |
| Will your support team help me optimize, enhance, or diagnose my site? | |
| Notes: | |
| Do you provide Managed DevOps solutions to assist with my performance, monitoring, and scaling needs? | |
| | |
| How do you document configuration customizations made on a per-client or per-site basis? Will I need to explain our setup every time that I interact with a different agent? | |
| | |
| What are your satisfaction percentages and NPS scores? | |
| | |
| Will you help me identify performance bottlenecks? | |
| | |
| What is the typical skill level of your support representatives? Will I know more about how to host websites than they do? | |
| | |
| How many tiers exist for your support desk? What's the secret "you can't talk about it" trick for getting to the top tier of support sooner? | |
| | |
| How will I be alerted to outages or performance problems on my site? | |
| | |

# QUESTIONS ON TRANSPARENCY
TRANSPARENCY IS THE HOST'S WILLINGNESS TO SHARE IMPORTANT DATA

You should always have as much data as possible to make informed decisions. Is the host giving you the whole story without leaving out any of the dirty details?

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| Which cloud hosting companies do you leverage, and what hardware specifications are you using? | |
| Notes: | |
| Can you tell me the exact specifications of the hardware that will be powering my website? How was this choice of hardware or instance type made? | |
| | |
| Is your platform primarily shared hosting, containers, VPS's, or dedicated servers? | |
| | |
| In terms of performance and security — Where do your services end and my responsibilities begin? | |
| | |
| Will we be given access to detailed performance data before being recommended a 'plan upgrade'? | |
| | |
| If you recommend partners or 3rd parties and receive compensation for recommending them, will this be disclosed at the time that the recommendation is made? | |
| | |

# QUESTIONS ON PRICE
THE COST OF THE OFFERING

| Question | Pass/Fail |
|---|---|
| Will it cost me more if your platform upgrades to better hardware? Will I receive the benefits of these platform changes? | |
| Notes: | |
| Do you offer any pass-through savings by hosting with you? | |
| | |
| Is the price we are discussing for a limited time? Will it go up upon renewal? | |
| | |
| Do you limit or bill based on page views or visits to my site? How is this data calculated? How does it compare to what I've collected from Google Analytics or other analytics providers? | |
| | |
| If the plan you are recommending is capped in some way, how do you handle overages? | |
| | |

# CONCLUSION

When conducting your search, the question you'll need to ask yourself boils down to this: "Do I trust this company to serve my interests more often than theirs?"

Moving an important website from one host to another is complex and can result in a feeling of being locked in. Due to that feeling of ecosystem lock-in, always be sure that you feel confident about any company that you'll be entering into a long-term relationship with.

## Get a second opinion

When you're getting answers to these critical questions from other hosts, we can help you fully understand what they mean. At Pagely, we offer all these levers turned up as high as our knowledge, experience, and physics will allow. However, some people do not require the level of service that we provide and may not be a good fit. Either way, we're here to bring trust back to hosting and help you make the informed choice for your needs.

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https://pagely.com