

True website cost: questions to ask

Before committing to any platform or developer, work through this list.

TOTAL COST

- What is the all-in 3-year cost?
- Are transaction fees charged on top?
- Is email hosting included?
- Are premium themes/plugins extra?
- Are there per-user charges?

OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

- Who owns the domain name?
- Who owns the content?
- Can you export all data freely?
- What happens if you stop paying?
- Can you switch platforms without penalty?

SEO

- Can you edit meta titles freely?
- Is the URL structure customisable?
- Can you add structured data / schema?
- Is there bloat from unused plugins?
- Is the site crawlable by Google?

LONG-TERM

- What is the support offering and cost?
- Is the platform actively maintained?
- How long has the provider been trading?

PERFORMANCE

- What is the mobile load time?
- What does Core Web Vitals show?
- Is image optimisation automatic?
- Is a CDN included or extra?
- Is caching configured correctly?

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

- Does cookie consent follow GDPR?
- Is the privacy policy specific to you?
- Are user data rights documented?
- Are third-party scripts disclosed?
- Is there an SSL certificate?

EMAIL

- Is SPF, DKIM, DMARC configured?
- Do transactional emails reach inboxes?
- Is email authentication handled for you?

MIGRATION RISK

- What are the migration costs to leave?
- Can you export a full data backup?
- Are there lock-in clauses in the contract?
- Who handles redirection if you move?

If a platform or developer can't answer these clearly, that is your answer.