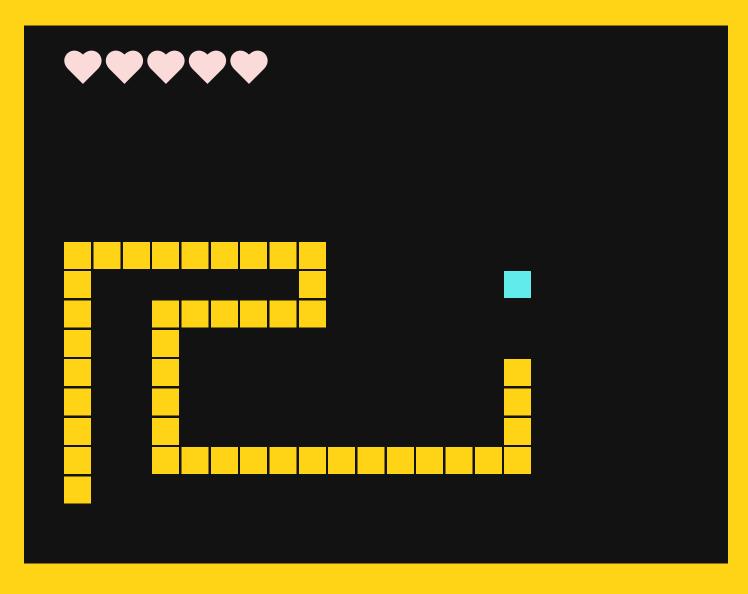
# Customer Care & Recurring Revenue Relationships







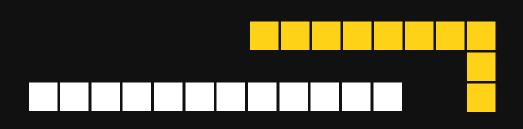
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#### Chapter 1:

## What is Customer Care?





#### What is customer care?

Customer care can take many forms

— website care plans, website
maintenance, even WordPress hosting
and technical support. Whatever the
name, the principle is the same.

As website designers or developers offering your service with website creation requires you to continue that relationship in some fashion long after the website is live.

#### TIP:

Customer care will transform how you do business.

#### Why?

Websites require software updates, uptime and security monitoring, as well as content updates when critical information changes.

With the fact that someone needs to offer this level of care, you have the opportunity as a business owner to transform the way that you continue your relationship with your client. In this Ebook, we'll detail the reasons for a strong customer care offering, components involved, and ways to sell this concept to your clients.

By spending the time to read through these principles and action steps, you'll find the value you need to attribute to your customer care offering, ways to advocate for your continued support, and discover the most proven path to increasing your recurring revenue.





Getting customer care right for your website clients leads to a complete transformation of your business to be more resilient, increased revenue, and less stress with predictable income. Viewing customer care as just customer service misses the point that a website care plan is beneficial to both you and your client.

Customer service implies that you simply serve the client based on their needs as they approach you. In actuality, customer care is proactive. It defines the needs for the client rather than the other way around.

With customer care, you reach out to the client and push the relationship forward with the goal of proactive care. Breaking out of the misconception of customer service can be the key to seeing customer care for websites as the key benefit of your clients working with you, rather than a requirement they have to subscribe to.

#### Chapter 2:

### Customer Care Plans Matter





## The impact of a customer care plan

Customer care plans matter to both you and your client. To explain, let's explore what happens when you don't offer customer care for a recently launched WordPress website.

Let's say a client has just paid \$5,000 for a brand new WordPress website. It uses a popular theme and has 12 plugins. If we contemplate the amount of code on this website, we see roughly hundreds of people contributing to how this website is operating, from the WordPress core developers, to the theme developer, and plugins developers.

At any point, these developers may push out a change to the code. This is why we need to see WordPress websites (or any website, for that matter) as "living and breathing things." Developers react to security threats, requests for improvements, and more importantly, they react to each others' updates.

When the WordPress core team of developers changes the code, the plugin and theme developers need to react with their own updates.

In this scenario, without customer care, the client is left to catch any issues on their website themselves. Once they do, they are likely to start Googling how to fix it and possibly end up on another website designer or developer's doorstep.

In their eyes, their \$5,000 investment is now "broken" since it was never explained to them that the second half of the website development project involved ongoing care. This misperception of the product and service you provided could lead the client to never send you any referrals.

It's a harsh scenario, but certainly very common. Unlike the days of static HTML/CSS code, websites today need to be kept constantly upto-date — and not just with code! Every month, Google's algorithm is changing, new social media channels boom, and design trends quickly become outdated.

In 2000, it was a win just to have a website! (Anyone else remember Y2K?)

Nowadays, it's a win when Google Analytics reflects a constant stream of conversions on their fast-loading 24/7 sales tool.

As a website designer and developer, you are creating storefronts that sustain brands, brochure sites that launch businesses, and communication channels that can actually influence the world.



"Automatic website updates vs. customer care" misses the point.

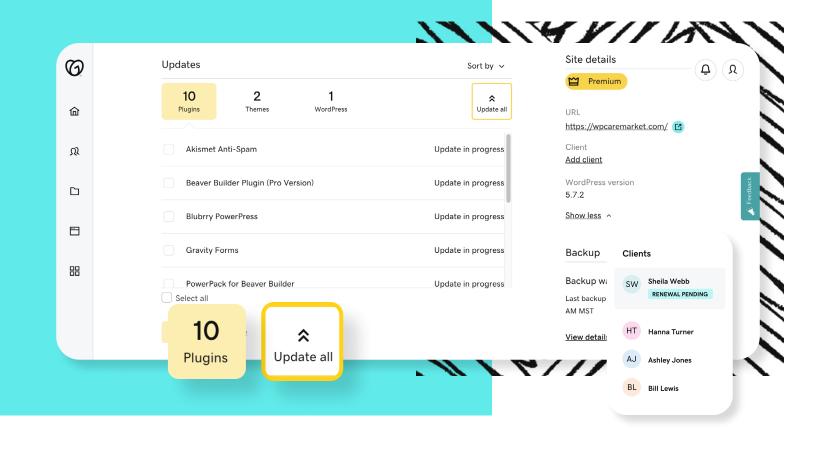
## The benefits of customer care subscriptions — to you and your clients!

So why can't we just have websites update automatically? If you think the conversation is automatic website updating vs. customer care, then you're missing the bigger picture. In this scenario, we'll observe from the website designer and developer's perspective.

A client has just paid you \$5,000 to build them a website. You set the website to update automatically and let the client know to come back for any other website needs. The client enjoyed working with you and decided to come back six months later to ask for some changes.

However, six months later you are in "overwhelmed" mode. It's been rough and you had to take on a few more projects than you'd like to because you didn't have a predictable income coming in. (Hey! You've got to eat, too!)

There's no time to make those small changes to your client's website and you ignore the email or refer them to another developer.



Again, it's a harsh scenario, but if you had seen the ability to keep their site up-to-date as an extension of a working relationship with them, they would have subscribed to ongoing customer care with you.

If you had known in advance that you would have had a secure stream of revenue from your client in-need (along with your other clients), it would have prevented you from taking on jobs and other commitments in order to maintain your bottom line. Having a secure agreement in place to keep your clients' site up-to-date would have given you predictable income to pace your month's work, keeping time open for existing client websites. Small updates are never a problem since they have a subscription for that level of care, and you can, realistically, turn them around within hours.

With clients on customer care subscriptions, every day you wake up and notice whether the website is up or not. When reading the latest news on marketing, you realize their website could benefit from the latest lead capture feature. When putting your monthly newsletter together, you realize that you have the perfect referral to help grow one of your clients' businesses.

## This is all proactive, top-of-mind, client relationship stuff.

In the scenario of offering customer care, you are able to present the client with quotes for improved SEO, adding lead capture forms, or even a referral for their business (which may even result in a referral commission). This is the way to do business when you are a small business — you build it on relationships, you build in on a list of clients that have invested in you so you invest in them. It's a reciprocal relationship — that is customer care.

#### TIP:

Customer care relationships puts clients top-of-mind.



#### Chapter 3:

# Components of a Successful Customer Plan





Building a successful care plan begins with exploring a core scope of work and adding in the line items that make you unique and valuable to your clients.

By having a set scope of work, you are essentially offering a productized service. With any productized service, the customer care plan needs to have strong boundaries and cannot fluctuate with each client.

By knowing exactly what goes into a customer care plan, you can accurately predict the time and cost spent and, therefore, construct your plans to be profitable and not a burden to your business.



#### Software updates

Just like your phone and computer, a website runs on software that needs constant updating. For WordPress websites, this ecompasses WordPress core, all the plugins, and the theme. Software updates are best run when you have the ability to check the website beforehand for any issues, update, then check the website after the update to see if anything broke.

Without a sophisticated visual regression checker, this usually means you have weekly or monthly updates (with the exception of updating for security vulnerabilities).

#### **Pro Tip**

#### Update from one dashboard

The Hub by GoDaddy Pro makes it easy to update your WordPress website's core, plugins, and theme from just one dashboard.





#### **Backups**

Offering backups may not seem like a perk when your client's web host is offering this service, but the ability to restore a backup is valuable. Since you are the expert in the website's creation, it will be 10 times faster for you to restore a backup on file, or from a third-party service, making sure the database (and not just the files) are properly restored.

Having a three-pronged system for backups is ideal. This would include the web host's backups, a third-party backup system, and pulling a backup down every year and storing it offsite.

#### **Pro Tip**



#### Reliable backups on your schedule

When you use The Hub by GoDaddy Pro, you get reliable, up-to-date backups for WordPress sites. Schedule incremental backups, or run on-demand, with off-site storage for up to 90 days.



#### **Performance monitoring**

This item includes constant uptime monitoring and performance reports. One of the most critical pieces of customer care is being proactive and spotting issues before your client does. With uptime monitoring, you are alerted when the website goes offline.

From there, you can contact the web host or the client if it's an issue with the domain or hosting renewal. In the same way, if you are running monthly performance reports, you can spot when a website has increased in load time, costing your client precious web visits.

**Pro Tip** 

#### Stay on top of performance

With The Hub by GoDaddy Pro, you can schedule automated performance checks and get detailed reports on what's affecting

performance, as well as recommendations for improvement.



#### Security monitoring

This system includes constant security monitoring in order to be notified of compromised files. Depending on how you built the website (or inherited it from another business) there should already be security hardening on the website like bot protection, blocking failed login attempts, and file optimization.

Having powerful security monitoring is critical to keeping your client's investment safe. This doesn't mean you are responsible if they were hacked (depending on what you offer) but it does mean you will have the tools in place to immediately help them get the help they need if something were to happen.

#### **Pro Tip**



#### Proactive security for peace of mind

The Hub by GoDaddy Pro lets you schedule web-based malware and vulnerability scans. Get notified instantly with detailed descriptions and a list of infected files. It also flags site errors, outdated software, and a blacklist check.



#### Site optimization

Website optimization includes spam comments cleanup, revision cleanup, broken link checking, and anything else that keeps the WordPress database optimization. With the right third-party software investment, this can become mostly hands-off.

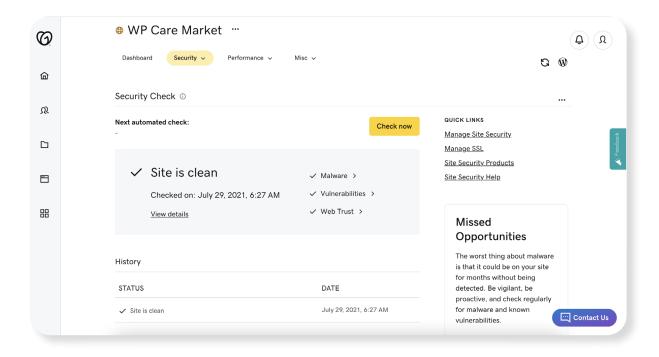
With the exception of broken link checking, site optimization should happen with every website software update. When it comes to broken link checking, just provide your client the list and they can take care of updating the links.

#### **Pro Tip**



#### Centralize your optimizations

With The Hub by GoDaddy Pro, you can easily provide site optimization from right inside the dashboard with comment cleanup, broken link checking, and more.



#### Reporting

To truly communicate the value of your customer care plan, you need to provide the right reporting to your client. Various types of reporting include Google Analytics, dashboards of statistics, and monthly PDF reports of the services carried out on their customer care plan.

However, not every client cares about the same statistics on each report.

Some clients obsess over website visitors, while others may be concerned that their website security is clean. When it comes to offering customer care, the most common reports involve providing information about what was updated, that their site was backed up, that the site is secure, and how well their site is currently loading with performance.

All in all, make sure you are sending something to their inbox every month, even if it is a simple email with highlights that their website is updated and the site is secure.

This reassures the client and reminds them of the work you are doing, especially since it happens in the background and may not always be top-of-mind for them. Sending a monthly report reminds them of the work you're doing to keep their website (and business!) up and running smoothly behind the scenes!

### Designated support, design, or development time

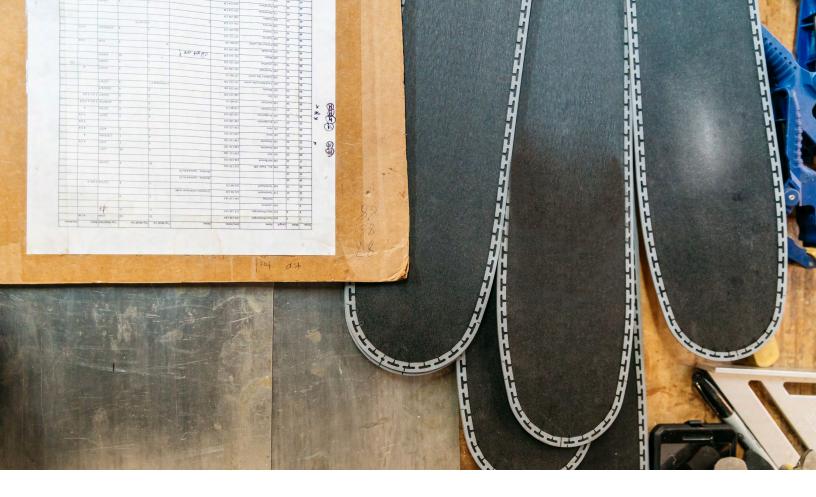
When offering customer care plans for websites that are public-facing storefronts of your client's business, you most certainly need to include some designated support time to carry out unpredictable requests.

Much like an insurance policy, it's a "use it or lose it" feature. By offering each client a certain amount of time for their customer care plan each month, you can make sure you are available to carry out impromptu requests that may pop up during the next 30 days. If they have needs, you can meet them within that time limit. If they don't request it, the time expires.

#### Why?

It's unsustainable to assume you would be available to carry out months of saved-up time at the drop of a hat. The support time included in your care plan is devoted to your clients' monthly needs, not for a client to save up the time and use for larger requests.





#### Additional line items

After these core scope of work items, there are numerous items you can include or use as a means of creating a "higher tiered" customer care plan. Much of it depends on the type of business you run, your clients' needs, and the types of websites you build. Some option items other customer care plans provide include a staging account, premium plugin licenses, and

monthly strategy calls. These are great "upsell" items for higher-cost plans.

In addition, ecommerce support requires more attention, therefore customer care plans for ecommerce websites are typically higher in price and have their own special features specific to ecommerce.

Additionally, you can take any of the line items above to the next level with an "enterprise" tier version. For example, security monitoring could be elevated to "Enterprise Security Monitoring" by simply adding malware clean-up and a firewall.

Determining what makes you unique for your clients doesn't mean you should stuff your customer care plans with features to make them look more valuable. Overstuffing your customer care plans could burden you with things your clients don't need or don't even care about.

Stick to what works for a website customer care solution and nothing more. You can always offer additional recurring services plans like SEO, social media management, or online marketing separately from your customer care plan. This way the two outcomes are clear, customer care with website maintenance should stand alone and be considered necessary.

#### TIP:

Any line item can be taken to the "enterprise" level.







It allowed me to run my business with predictable income, hire a team and ultimately raise four children from home while still being a working mom."

Kristina Romero Designer

## How Care Plans are Helping GoDaddy Pro Members

Thousands of GoDaddy Pro Members are using care plans to run successful web businesses. Yet, each one had to start from zero.

"Offering customer care plans changed everything in my business. It allowed me to run my business with predictable income, hire a team and ultimately raise four children

from home while still being a working mom."

Kristina Romero began KR
Media & Designs in 2009
building websites in HTML
and CSS before finally
discovering WordPress. It
wasn't until 2013 that she
started offering ongoing
website customer care to
her clients.

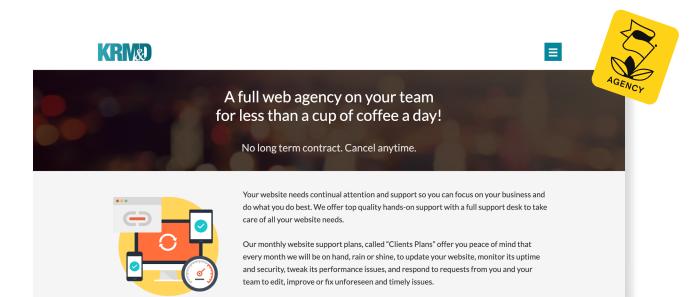
By that time, she had about 20 potential clients to reach back out to and signed up nine on that first attempt. Over the years, Kristina grew her website customer care clients to 50 websites, managing them with GoDaddy's platform.

The recurring revenue allowed her to take three maternity leaves, hire a team, and reduce her hours to be both a business owner and stay-at-home mom. Kristina has been so successful in running her website customer care plans she now teaches others how to set up, execute and sell them in her own training program WP Care Market.

#### Chapter 4:

## Selling a Care Plan



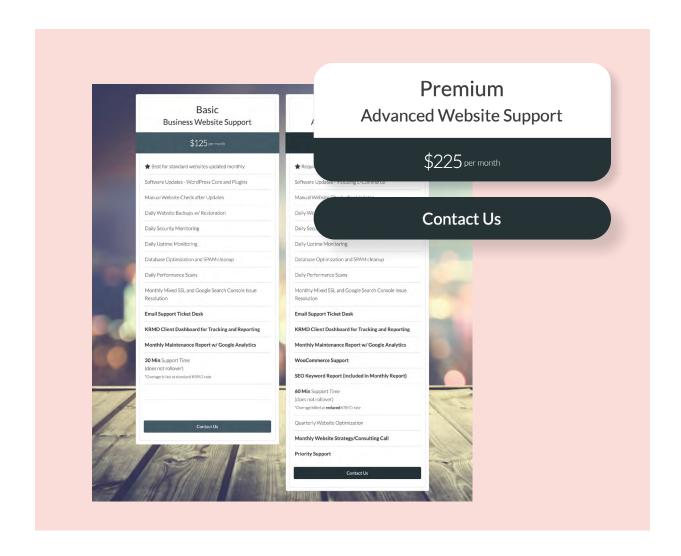


## Steps towards selling a care plan

Now that you've seen out what you should be offering and why it's important, let's explore how to sell this to your clients.

Although we are highlighting "selling," the better term to use here is "positioning."

As customer care plans for websites are often necessary, it shouldn't be a hard sell. The challenge is how to have the client understand why this is necessary and why they should engage in this care plan with you.



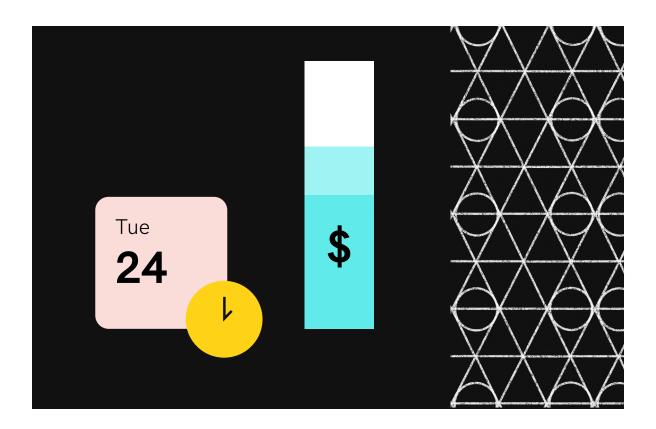
#### A word about pricing

Before we get into selling, we first need to address the purple elephant in the room — pricing. Pricing does have a place in the selling conversation but it's not as important as many think. This is because your clients trust you to put forth fair pricing.

Clients will always look at pricing against how the customer care plan benefits them. This is why positioning the plan is more important than the price itself. Pricing your customer care plan should be determined by estimating the time it takes to execute your line items (assuming they use their support time every month), along with the cost of the tools. As you sign up more clients, the cost of tools per client reduces and your processes become air-tight.

Your efficiency with processes, automation, and the right tools will eventually bring down the time spent and contribute to making your plans more profitable. Work toward having at least a 50% to 70% profit margin on your customer care plans.

This means, if your hourly rate is \$75 and you have a customer care plan that takes you 60 minutes to execute, you could start off pricing it anywhere around \$115/month to \$125/month.



#### TIP:

A sales page is a must.

#### For new clients:

With new clients, it's a blank slate and often the best place to begin. If you are just starting to offer customer care plans, or are considering revamping your current plans, you may have an easier time positioning these plans to new clients that come in for website projects.

#### Begin with a sales page and pricing table

The first thing you must have in this situation is a sales page that makes a compelling argument for the customer care plan, the key features, and benefits, and the plans you offer. Much of the argument has been made for you in this ebook, you just now need to put that into your own words for your types of clients. The pricing table for what's included in your plans should be simple line items. Clients don't need to know why, just the "what."



#### On your sales page outline:

—01 Your key value proposition for offering care plans
In one sentence, explain why clients need to sign

up for your customer care plan. Does it save them money, save them time, or give them peace of mind?

#### -02 The top three to six benefits for your clients

Clients won't care about the technical features of the plan to the same level of specificity as you do. Instead, to better frame the plan in terms of something that feels more meaningful to your clients, highlight the benefits of engaging with you for a more robust customer care plan. Frame it in a context that will resonate for them in terms of what the plan will do for them. For example, "Google Analytics Reports" doesn't convey as much value (or sound as sweet) as "Know Your Website Visitor Numbers."

"The Latest Software Updates" may convey tons of value, however, following that up with "Fast Loading, Error-Free Website" can be specific as to what they get from those updates.

#### ──03 Pricing table

Having a punch list of the items outlined under the price is a great way to quickly mention the technical features of the plan without overwhelming your client. Many pricing tables have tooltips or accordions to allow you to add more details.

Pricing tables also afford you a way to present more than one plan to upsell a client to a plan that's a better fit for them. You'll commonly see three tiers of customer care plans. However, you don't have to offer more than one — just offer what you believe your clients need. If a group of clients need more attention or premium-level services, that's reason enough to

#### -04 Call to action

Every sales page needs a call to action. Your customer care plan sales page is no different. If you are in a place to take on clients as cold leads, then have your call to action be a checkout button. If you like to screen your clients to make sure you are getting people you want to work with, send them a screening form or link to book a call.



#### Position before the start of the project

While your sales page is designed to convince existing customers and to attract new leads, the phone calls you have with your client are the best opportunities to sell this plan. The perfect time for positioning your customer care plans is when you first speak with the lead. Leverage the fact that you offer ongoing website care as a perk of working with you.

This way, they know that after the project they will still have your attention, you will still be in business, and you'll still be there to help with their needs.

#### Include the care details in the proposal

It's best to include the details of the customer care plan in your project proposals. Whether you make it required for working with you is up to you. It can be part of the proposal's final total (i.e. first year, first six months), it could be a line item that goes into effect once the website is live, or it could be presented as an option that will be addressed after the site has gone live. There are pros and cons to all these approaches. We'll discuss this in more detail in the next section on relationships.



Sell your plan on calls with your clients.



#### Include 30 days of the customer care plan in website launches

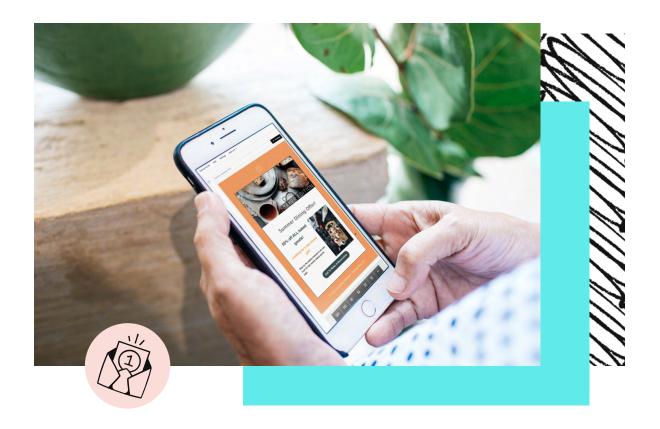
Even if you don't require a customer care plan to work with you, offering your client an incentive, such as the first 30 days free on a customer care plan can be an attractive part of your package that leads to a continued (paid) relationship with your client. This strategy offers you an opportunity to showcase the work that goes into customer care. It's a way to prove the value of your work. At the end of the 30 days, you can then send them a report of the customer care work completed along with a link to sign up and continue the service.



#### For existing clients:

Converting existing clients takes a little more grit. Since existing clients have a frame of reference for working with you, they have to be re-educated. Often website designers and developers don't realize how simple and straightforward this can be if their clients have a likable and pleasant working relationship.

By stating, "this is how we work now" or "these are our new prices," clients with positive relationships already see value in what you do and will agree to move forward on those new terms.



#### Create an "announcement" email

The easiest way to announce a change to offering customer care plans or reworking new plans that customers need to convert onto is through a company "announcement" email. Begin with a reason for the change, what's changed, how this benefits the client, and what they need to do next.

If clients are already subscribed to a plan, then this may simply involve changing their plan on your backend with no action required. (However, for your clients' own business and tax purposes, having a written statement of charges, any discounts they've received as a result of loyalty, and when they've been assessed can foster a greater sense of trust and transparency!) For clients that are not on a plan and need to be on one, this requires action on their part and leads to the next point.



#### Offer a time frame and "legacy client" rate for the new plans

If clients have been working with you in the past and their website isn't down or hacked, there is no sense of urgency for them to suddenly jump on the bandwagon of a new customer care plan. This is why you need to stress two things:

- First, you are building an exclusive client list and will only work with and give priority attention to this list. Once it's full you won't be able to be their point of contact for their website moving forward.
- Second, the rate you are offering them now will go up in the future. Signing up by a certain deadline will allow them to lock in this legacy client rate.

#### Require old clients to be on a care plan for future work

There is a good chance that half of the clients who used to work with you will not sign up right away. That's okay. The real opportunity for conversion comes in the form of a conversation when they come back to you after you've started offering customer care plans.

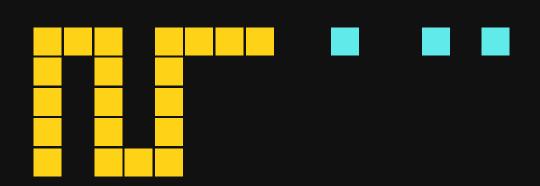
This is the moment where you can truly sell the care plan by letting them know they have to be on a customer care plan to work with you. They may have ignored your original email, but now they are in need. In this moment, they can see a more pressing need for a care plan and how it can now benefit them.

The argument for selling customer care on a recurring monthly basis is simple — your clients need to have their website cared for and by being on a care plan they get your proactive and expert attention for growth.

Clients who find value in the relationship will convert and remain on your plans for years to come. Conversion may not be immediate, and you may have to prove the relationship and expertise are worth it over the course of the project or when they return to you after months of going without your help.

#### Chapter 5:

## Recurring Revenue Relationships





clients

Customer care plans are meant to be an ongoing transactional process that benefits both the client and yourself for continued growth. This is why we need to look at them as <u>recurring revenue</u> relationships. Not every subscription service requires a relationship. After all, you're not chatting it up with Netflix or Amazon, so why should this relationship be any different?

As a small business owner, when you offer a customer care plan, you are communicating to the client that you both will learn and grow together.

By offering support time, strategy calls, and reporting, you are showcasing that you keep the customer's website growth as a top priority. If the customer invests in an ongoing relationship through a customer care plan with you, then they, too, are contributing to the growth of your business. The transaction becomes mutually beneficial.

## The 3 principles of client relationships

Without positive customer care relationships, clients could start looking for cheaper-priced mass-market solutions. Part of the perk of continuing a relationship with you is that they get the more personalized attention that comes from working with a small business or independent service provider. They get to talk to a real person, and feel like an actual person is looking out for them.

Additionally, if you are a website designer or website developer, you offer more than just customer care. With mass market solutions for website maintenance, the ability to get additional designs or features doesn't exist. Therefore, you need to leverage the fact that you provide additional services for your clients' needs. Being proactive is the key to this type of client relationship.

#### —01 Focus on needs before they become problems

Part of being proactive with customer care is addressing the things your client's website needs before they even realize they have a need for it. Basically, you are addressing a need before it becomes a problem. This tenet is at the core of

website maintenance. Simply put, every month you update the website is one month that the website is up, running, functional, and drawing steady business for your client.

The same concept can apply to design changes, lead capture forms, tweaking copy for conversion, and much more. By being proactive, you prevent problems (and request tickets) down the road. Proactive solutions don't need to be included in the customer care plan price, but can be separate projects your clients pay for.

#### —02 Become the expert and basis for all referrals

By being the website customer care solution for your client, you should also become the expert they turn to for all of their website concerns. Do not shy away from the emails that ask questions of you for things you don't offer. Take those emails as a sign that you are being viewed as the expert and work to have a referral network for your clients.



Do the legwork to find the most common questions your clients ask and have the places (and people) to send them to in order for those questions to be addressed. Join communities to build a strong network or other website designers and developers for referral commission or partnerships.

#### — 03 Set boundaries and stick to them

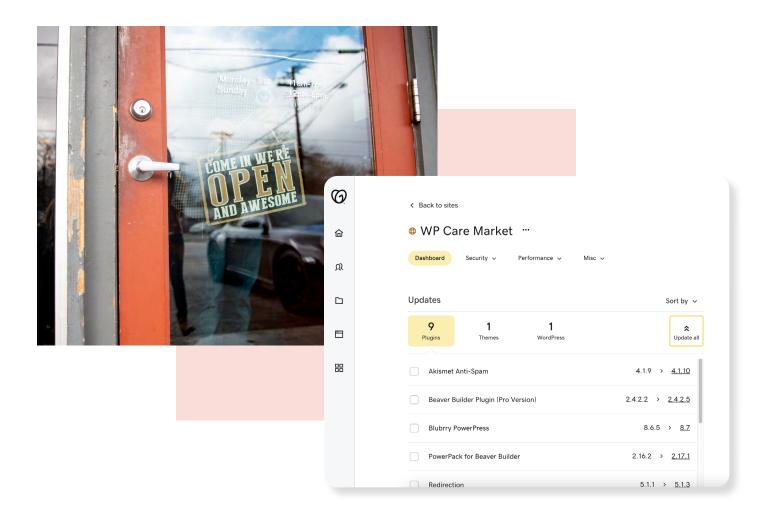
Be very clear about what you offer and what you don't offer with your plans. Don't keep important disclaimers hidden in contracts, talk them out with your clients or highlight them in your onboarding email. It's ok to be clear that you are not a big company and work Monday through Friday, 9-to-5.

Customer care can become stressful and overwhelming if you don't stick to the boundaries you set for your clients. The majority of your clients will comply. However, those that don't just aren't the clients you want to work with. Setting and enforcing boundaries can ensure you don't feel the pangs of burnout and can be an effective partner for all of your clients.

With The Hub by GoDaddy Pro, you can join a community. Learn, grow and connect with other like-minded designers and developers



Sign up for Free



## Recurring Revenue Keeps Both Partners in Business

It does not benefit your clients if, one day, they have an issue with the website you created and you are no longer in business. If clients have positive working relationships with you while building the website, the trust is there for you to continue that relationship long after the website has gone live.

The reality is that the website needs you, too! For far too long, website designers and developers have been in the mindset that website creation is a project-based business. It's time we view it as a customer care business.

In this day and age, website creation cannot be a project-based business with trends, code, and algorithms constantly changing at such a rapid rate. As a website designer and developer, you have to stay up on trends, continue to monitor code changes and research shifts in algorithms. This is a monthly task. When clients invest in you to care for their website, they are investing in your growth as well.

For every piece of knowledge you receive, you pass it onto your clients.

Every new feature you discover is something you offer up to your clients as a future task. Since they are on a monthly customer care plan, they are now part of your exclusive customer care list.

For your client, this means that their website will benefit from your expertise to keep their business thriving and expanding. A simple feature added, thanks to your constant attention, may be the saving grace to a converted sale or contact form submission that otherwise may not have come through.

#### Chapter 6:

## Conclusion





Customer care plans are necessary, especially for WordPress websites. More than just website maintenance, customer care is elevated customer service where you are proactive and attentive to the growth of your client's website.

Due to your expertise as a designer and developer, you can offer more than just website updates. When a client enrolls in one of your customer care plans, they become part of an exclusive list of clients who you focus on monthly to deliver on their needs.

As you set boundaries for what you offer and the type of clients you work with, you will begin to discover that the recurring revenue from the customer care plan can provide your business the stability it needs in a "feast or famine" industry. By focusing on customer care as a key component of how you work, you will build a loyal client base of continued work due to your proactive outreach.

Begin creating or revamping your customer care plan with this focus and you will see your business transform. In order to position your customer care properly, focus on relationships. Engage with the clients you know you can help, even if their needs are small. As you grow, so will they. In the end, you'll discover more ways to assist your clients, and in turn, more revenue from those customer care relationships.



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# About the Author Kristina Romero

Kristina Romero, owner of WP Care Market, began as a website developer creating sites for companies that included Coca-Cola Company, Food Network, and Hollywood celebrities. Through her experience running a web agency, she developed a passion for helping other website professionals grow their business and better serve their clients. Since 2016, Kristina shifted to coaching and has trained thousands of web professionals with content across the web including webinars and courses for WP Elevation, WordCamps, GoDaddy Pro and more. With her training program WP Care Market, Kristina's built a way for website professionals to discover a library of quality training around caring for their clients that increases their revenue and betters their client relationships.