Automattic Turns Against WordPress Community Itself via @sejournal, @martinibuster



Automattic announced it is minimizing support for the WordPress.org CMS project, framing the withdrawal of resources as a positive change to strengthen WordPress. The announcement attributed the decision to WP Engine's lawsuit and by the sentiment that the WordPress "community" that seemingly approves of this level of investment.

Automattic Asserts It's The Victim

Multiple passages from Automattic's post portray it as a victim and frames the withdrawal of support as the unavoidable consequence of WP Engine's lawsuit against Automattic, expressing that it remains "hopeful" that WP Engine will drop the lawsuit so that it can restore funding for WordPress.

At no point in the statement does Automattic acknowledge its role in creating the conflict, instead portraying itself as having been forced to minimize support for WordPress.org due solely to WP Engine's lawsuit.

> *"Additionally, we're having to spend significant time and money to defend ourselves against the legal attacks started by WP Engine and funded by Silver Lake, a large private equity firm.*
>
> *…We've made the decision to reallocate resources due to the lawsuits from WP Engine.*
>
> *…This legal action diverts significant time and energy that could otherwise be directed toward supporting WordPress's growth and health.*
>
> *…We remain hopeful that WP Engine will reconsider this legal attack, allowing us to refocus our efforts on contributions that benefit the broader WordPress ecosystem."*

Automattic Turns Against The WordPress "Community"

Automattic's statement also points a finger at the WordPress community to justify pulling back resources. It wraps the word **community** in quotation marks to reference critics, portraying them as the aggressors for launching personal attacks against Mullenweg and employees of Automattic.

> *"We've also faced intense criticism and even personal attacks against a number of Automatticians from members of the 'community' who want Matt and others to step away from the project."*

Instead of addressing the substance or specifics of the criticism, the statement emphasizes the personal nature of

them, framing them as attacks to elicit sympathy for Automattic as the victims and deflecting attention from the reasons for the criticism.

In another passage the statement shifts blame for its actions onto the critics, again referring to them as members of the "community," subtly portraying them as prioritizing their own self-interests and demonstrating how Automattic is the true selfless supporter of WordPress.org.

> *…Automatticians who contributed to core will instead focus on for-profit projects within Automattic, such as WordPress.com, Pressable, WPVIP, Jetpack, and WooCommerce. Members of the 'community' have said that working on these sorts of things should count as a contribution to WordPress."*

Use Of Doublespeak

Automattic's statement uses language that crosses the line into doublespeak. Doublespeak is a concept derived from author George Orwell's concept of doublethink, which is about holding two contradictory statements as true, such as war is peace. Doublespeak distorts reality and masks the true intent of a statement.

Automattic's use of this mode of communication goes beyond persuasion by framing the weakening of support for WordPress as an act of strengthening it.

Example of doublespeak:

> *"To recalibrate and ensure our efforts are as impactful as possible, Automattic will reduce its sponsored contributions to the WordPress project. This is not a step we take lightly. It is a moment to regroup, rethink, and strategically plan how Automatticians can continue contributing in ways that secure the future of WordPress for generations to come. "*

The portrayal of the withdrawal of support as a way of securing “the future of WordPress for generations to come” is manipulative and hides the reality that those actions have the opposite effect.

Another passage portrays the weaking of WordPress as way to strengthen it:

> *“This realignment is not an end, but a new beginning—one that will ultimately strengthen the foundation of WordPress.”*

The entire announcement portrays Automattic as the victim, WP Engine as the aggressor and the WordPress community itself as complicit in undermining itself. The reality is that Matt Mullenweg is the aggressor, WP Engine is the attacked and the community are seeking to strengthen WordPress.org with a sensible governance that includes the voices of the entire WordPress community, including Matt Mullenweg’s voice.

Backlash Against Automattic’s Marginalization Of Critics

Putting quotes around a word, the way Automattic did for the word “community,” is a way to call into question what that word represents. In the context of Automattic’s announcement, their use of quotation marks has the effect of questioning the legitimacy of critics and marginalizes them as not true members of the WordPress community. But that’s an inaccurate portrayal of the critics, many of whom are high contributing developers to the WordPress project for decades.

Automattic posted a link to their announcement on X and the meaning of the use of quotation marks around the word community was not lost on members of the WordPress community.

A respondent to Automattic’s post on X referred to the quotation marks around the word *community* as Scare Quotes:

> *“If this means throttling back the forced effort on Gutenberg that nobody in the “community” (your scare quotes, not mine) wants, then this is a fantastic development.”*

Another commenter also referenced Automattic’s use of quotation marks around the word community:

> *“Has the “community” got the access to carry on or is this just a hostage situation?”*

Milestone In Mullenweg’s War Against WP Engine

Leaving aside the use of doublespeak within Automattic’s announcement, attacking the WordPress community itself is a milestone in the continued unraveling of the WordPress project that was initiated by Matt Mullenweg’s self-described “nuclear” war.

Read the statement here:

Aligning Automattic’s Sponsored Contributions to WordPress

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https://www.searchenginejournal.com/automattic-turns-against-wordpress-community-itself/537223/