WooCommerce Rebrand Offers Lessons For Gaining Competitive Edge via @sejournal, @martinibuster

An interview with WooCommerce shows that their recent rebrand is a strategic refresh, offering lessons for businesses and search marketers on how to stay relevant and competitive.

A Business Refresh

A recently announced rebrand by WooCommerce is far more than a logo update; it's part of an evolution of their platform that demonstrates the strategic value of reassessing user expectations to stay competitive.

A spokesperson from WooCommerce agreed:

> *"Exactly: the brand update reflects our broader evolution toward a more integrated platform. While the visual changes are noticeable, they represent our shift toward making WooCommerce more powerful out of the box while maintaining the flexibility of open source."*

From Evolution To A Refresh

WooCommerce has been on a steady evolution from a plugin to a platform. And even though it's referred to itself as a platform for awhile now, the evolution from plugin to platform is speeding up because of an internal WooCommerce initiative called More In Core. Announced in 2024, More In Core is a

shift to a WooCommerce experience that provides a more complete ecommerce experience straight of the box, delivering the core functionalities that most ecommerce sites need without needing to install additional plugins.

One of the examples, from October 2024, is the Brand Plugin integration, which used to be a premium plugin but is now a standard feature of the platform itself. The Brand feature enables store owners to create a taxonomy based on brands.

A WooCommerce spokesperson explained:

> *"While 'More in Core' is an internal name we use (we're excited about these improvements!), our goal isn't simply adding more features – it's about thoughtfully building a comprehensive commerce platform that delivers the essential tools that the majority of merchants need out of the box, reducing plugin conflict and management, increasing the depth of integration between platform features, and freeing builders and sellers to focus on other parts of their business.*
>
> *We're starting by integrating Woo-owned extensions, like Brands. This isn't about removing opportunities for third-party developers – we remain committed to a vibrant ecosystem where developers can build and grow on our platform. We're carefully considering which features are truly essential for most merchants and integrating them in ways that maintain the flexibility WooCommerce is known for.*
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> *Looking ahead to 2025, merchants and developers can expect continued thoughtful and deep integration of key features, continued performance improvements across product and order management in particular, and a streamlined user experience that's leveraging more and more of WordPress' modern admin designs."*

User Experience And UI

Focusing on the user is a great place to start a business refresh. Do site visitors use your site the same way? Are there emerging trends to consider?

I asked WooCommerce if there were any any specific UX and UI improvements implemented as part of their recent February 2025 brand refresh. They answered:

> *"The brand refresh aligns with ongoing work to make WooCommerce more intuitive. We're focusing first on improving core experiences in the admin interface and store management — the essential interactions our merchants use daily.*
>
> *More specifically, we're rolling out improvements to the payments onboarding and configuration experience.*
>
> *We're creating a new commerce-optimized starter theme with a set of creative variations available out of the box. We're iterating rapidly on the WooCommerce Analytics product we just released in beta, and collaborating directly with the community on new capabilities around order status and fulfillment management."*

Lessons For Search Marketers

I asked about how their brand refresh fits into a larger strategy in order to find out what others can learn about doing something like this for their own brands and websites. I asked them for what lessons search marketers could learn from their experience and they described a process that identified stakeholders from the ecosystem to the users, user expectations set by competitors and wrapping all of that into creating their refresh.

The WooCommerce spokesperson shared:

> *“Our rebrand considered the multiple groups that make up our ecosystem: builders who create stores for clients, developers who create products and extensions, merchants who run their businesses on WooCommerce, hosts who help connect us to a larger set of customers, and contributors to our open source platform. The key was researching each group to understand how they interact with WooCommerce differently: developers building businesses on our platform, merchants managing daily operations, builders creating client sites, and contributors enhancing the core platform.*
>
> *And of course we also had to factor in the current landscape. What other ecommerce platforms look like, what other technology companies look like — and how can we stand out. All that, plus we needed to make sure it felt true to Woo: that it aligned with our open-source roots, what we believe in, and what the platform does. We’re incredibly proud of what our in-house design and marketing teams accomplished here; it’s a great demonstration of the team we’ve assembled and what they’re capable of.*
>
> *For search marketers, there’s a valuable lesson here about understanding your different audience segments and how they interact with your product or service. Just as we needed to consider how our brand speaks to builders versus merchants versus developers, search marketers need to consider how different user groups search for and interact with their content. It’s about creating a cohesive message that resonates across audiences while addressing their specific needs and pain points.”*

Priorities For A Refresh

Some people like the flexibility of only activating needed functionalities because of concerns about the performance hit that comes from feature bloat. My understanding is that there are ways to turn off unneeded functionalities, is that true?

Would turning them off be as simple as a toggle (a module UI), or would they have to jump into the code to do that?

How does one go about deciding what what's best for the user? At what point do you say, not enough people need this?

WooCommerce offered the following useful insights:

> *"We're being very thoughtful about considering what features become part of core WooCommerce. We started by looking at our own premium extensions that provide essential commerce functionality — features that most merchants need to run their businesses effectively.*
>
> *This isn't about adding features just to add them, and it's definitely not about limiting opportunities for third-party developers who are crucial to our ecosystem. We recognize that some merchants and builders need specific features that our extensions don't offer — and that's the power of WooCommerce. At the same time, we also recognize that having to manage multiple extensions for simple functions, like brands, can create pain points.*
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> *Instead, it's about providing a solid foundation that both merchants and developers can build upon. Features can be easily enabled or disabled through the admin interface so merchants can keep their sites lean and fast. This modular approach means stores can use what they need while developers can continue to innovate and extend the platform in new ways, relying on robust core functionality that's always available.*
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> *When evaluating what becomes part of core, we look at how essential the feature is for most merchants — what they need to get a store online, selling, shipping, and getting paid — plus how it fits into the broader WooCommerce ecosystem. And of course for anything we add into core, performance is top of mind for our product teams.*
>
> *Our goal is to strengthen the platform's foundation while*

> *maintaining the openness and flexibility that makes WooCommerce so powerful. In some cases we're looking at opening up new capabilities via lower level changes, without necessarily dictating how those capabilities should be used. Order statuses are a good example here: adding separate statuses for fulfillment and payment enables all sorts of new functionality, even if we don't immediately require all solutions to leverage both."*

Focus On Performance

Adding more features or code to a site can degrade performance, something WooCommerce considered as part of the initiative. Adding needed functions helped make the entire platform more stable which ended up helping performance.

An example that WooCommerce shared was last year's introduction of High-Performance Order Storage (HPOS), an optimized way to store customer order information that increases store website performance over the traditional ways of handling the same data.

The spokesperson answered:

> *"Performance remains fundamental to our approach. When we consider adding features to core, we're actually making a thoughtful trade-off: for functionality that most merchants need, having it built-in and optimized is often more performant than requiring an additional plugin. This can reduce complexity and potential conflicts while improving overall site performance.*
>
> *Our team ensures that as we integrate features, we're doing so in a way that maintains or improves site speed. HPOS is a prime example – we're rebuilding fundamental structures to improve scalability. Each feature addition is carefully evaluated for its performance impact, and we're committed to*

keeping WooCommerce fast and efficient. We're also currently in the middle of a performance review across all of our main functionalities to see where we can make improvements ahead of adding anything new.

For 2025, our focus is on thoughtfully enhancing WooCommerce's essential capabilities while maintaining the open ecosystem that lets developers build innovative solutions for merchants, and improving the quality of our user experience from end to end. The goal isn't to add more for the sake of more – it's about providing a solid, performant foundation that benefits merchants, builders, and developers, and raising the bar for everyone."

Should You Consider A Business Refresh?

What WooCommerce is doing is a reminder that settling on a strategy and moving forward year after year isn't enough; consumer needs and the ways they interact online are constantly evolving. Taking inventory of emerging trends and user expectations is a sound practice for keeping an enterprise fresh and relevant—especially important right now as the Internet undergoes one of the most significant transformations in decades. Ultimately, consumers, not competitors, should drive your strategy. Identifying better ways to interact with users, customers, and site visitors can help position you as the disruptor rather than the disrupted.

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