After a very long and frustrating road, I finally got my first blog working. Wait? You might be asking why that was so hard. If you've seen all the commercials on YouTube for Hostinger, boasting how easy it is to get your blog up in just a few clicks, my struggles might not seem to make any sense. Well, there are a couple of reasons why it was so hard for me, and I'm glad I did it this way. Let me explain.

You see, I have been studying web development for about a year at this point. In the beginning, I vowed to code everything I needed. At the time, I had it in my head that eventually, I would be able to do it all from scratch. I did not fully grasp the problem, as novices often do. At the time, I was dabbling in affiliate marketing. The power of making money simply by using your internet skills to move a product you didn't have to take significant risks to present to the market intrigued me. I started learning about it, and one of the first steps was to create a blog. Well, once I started, I realized my handle on JavaScript was less than what was required to get the simplest thing off the ground. I looked again at my resources. As often happened, I started to question whether coding it out was the best way after all. I saw many YouTubers advocating for making a simple WordPress blog, attaching your links, and there you go. I have long been “playing” with WordPress blogs, often hosting them on some private server with futile attempts to will myself into sharing it publicly.

One morning, I jumped on Udemy and purchased a course on blog creation taught by a very pleasant British WordPress developer with loads of experience. He really could drive that beast. WordPress is a beast. It comes pre-installed with all kinds of stuff, the bloatware I normally associate with earlier versions of Windows.

After the results of a few Lighthouse tests, after doing everything I could think of, I decided to refocus my efforts on JavaScript and React. So, with renewed determination, I attacked the problem again. I realized there were two issues I could see:

1. The utility of a drag-and-drop building workflow disappears slowly with more coding proficiency. a. I started to get annoyed with the lack of control I was realizing I had with code.
2. The performance. I stripped it down as far as I could get it after reading a number of articles and tutorials on improving performance and Lighthouse scores. Nothing got it above mediocre.

I knew I was starting to enjoy React more and more the more I understood it (Still a beginner but out of the classroom and onto the road now). My question was, how do I create a blog in Next.js?

**Headless CMS**

As I ventured further into the web development world, the concept of a headless CMS caught my attention. Unlike traditional CMS platforms like WordPress, where the front end and the back end are tightly coupled, a headless CMS provides only the back end or the content repository. This setup meant I could use any front-end technology to display the content, and for me, that was React and Next.js.

Why Headless CMS?

The allure of a headless CMS was in its flexibility and the performance gains it offered. I could create a lightning-fast blog that was also a joy to work with, thanks to React's component-based architecture and the static site generation features of Next.js. Plus, a headless CMS could integrate seamlessly with other services, providing a more scalable and customizable solution.

Technical Deep Dive

In the next section of my blog, I plan to offer a simplified guide or key insights into setting up a blog with Next.js and a headless CMS. I'll highlight the main steps, challenges I overcame, and tips for beginners. From choosing the right headless CMS to configuring Next.js for optimal performance, I aim to demystify the process for those who, like me, are on their journey from novice to proficient developers.

Conclusion

Reflecting on my journey from a beginner overwhelmed by the complexities of web development to successfully launching a blog using advanced technologies like React and Next.js has been incredibly rewarding. I encourage my readers to embrace the learning process, experiment with new technologies, and not shy away from coding. The sense of accomplishment in overcoming these challenges is unparalleled.

Call to Action

I'd love to hear about your experiences, struggles, and successes in the comments below. Let's build a community of learners and shared knowledge.

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