

Hello everyone.

From now on, I'd like to talk about

# How can theme developers monetize in the era of Block Themes?



First of all,  
My name is Ishikawa  
I'm a WordPress theme  
developer.

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In 2012,  
I released a general-purpose WordPress  
theme in Japan.

In 2015  
I published Theme Lightning on  
wordpress.org

# Lightning

By Hidekazu Ishikawa



Lightning is a very simple & easy to customize theme which is based on the Bootstrap. It is also very friendly with custom post types and custom taxonomies. When you add a new one, the breadcrumbs will be adjusted and posts will look beautifully without editing or adding a template files.

Preview

Download

Version: 15.2.4

Last updated: December 26, 2022

Active Installations: 80,000+

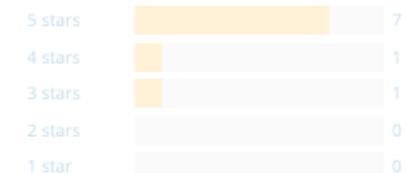
WordPress Version: 5.5 or higher

PHP Version: 5.6.0 or higher

[Theme Homepage →](#)

## Ratings

★★★★★ 4.5 out of 5 stars.



Add my review

In 2022

I published Block theme X-T9 on  
wordpress.org

I also make a living by developing and  
selling theme extension plugins and  
other plug-ins.

The screenshot shows the X-T9 WordPress Theme page on wordpress.org. At the top, there's a header with the theme name "X-T9" and "By Hidekazu Ishikawa". Below the header is a navigation bar with links for "About", "Service", "Design Sample", and "Information". On the right side of the header, there are "Preview" and "Download" buttons, along with a heart icon for favoriting. The main content area features a large image of a starry sky with mountains in the foreground. Overlaid on this image is the text "Let's embark on a new journey". Below this, there are four sections with placeholder text: "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.", "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.", "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.", and "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.". At the bottom of the page, there are "Style Variants" and "Ratings" sections. The "Ratings" section includes a chart showing the number of reviews for each star rating: 5 stars (0), 4 stars (0), 3 stars (0), 2 stars (0), and 1 star (0). A "Add my review" button is located at the bottom right.

like me, Business model of theme authors is

Create and sell

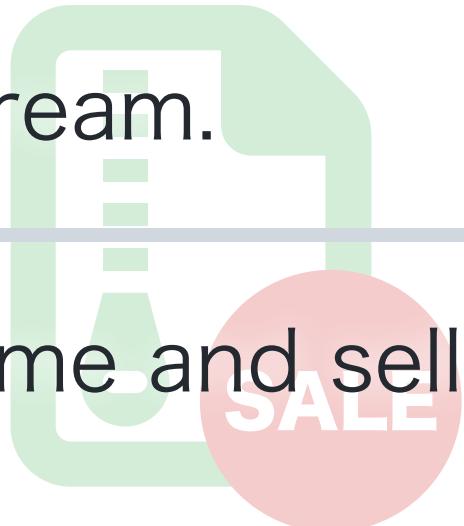
Premium Themes and Plugins

I think these were the mainstream.

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We could simply create a theme and sell it as a zip file.

It was relatively possible to sell and make money.





**Points where  
monetization has  
become more difficult**

# # 01

Traditional monetization  
points become less  
effective



Active theme  
Lightning

Change

Site Identity

Colors

Before FSE

Menus

Widgets

Additional CSS

Lightning Function Settings

Lightning Design settings

Lightning Header Top Settings

Lightning Header Settings

Lightning Home page slide show

Lightning Header Side Bar

Lightning Layout Settings

Lightning Archive Page Settings

Lightning Single Page Setting

Lightning Copyright Setting

Lightning Mobile Nav

Lightning Mobile Fix Nav

Lightning Font Awesome

Accelerate your business

Lightning ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur  
adipiscing elit,sed do eiusmod tempor.

READ MORE

Theme authors  
develop themes with unique editing  
functions  
and sell Premium themes

User can easily edit  
Theme creators could get rewarded

Such a relationship existed and  
there was one monetization point here

< Lightning >  
WordPress Theme

Layout Control

Lightning has column control function that you can specific column number from "Appearance  
Customize > Lightning Layout Setting" and specific post edit screen.

However, in FSE,

Users can customize entire site with no code, just standard WordPress ~~features~~ features.

This makes it much less dependent on the theme.



**Then as someone who made a  
living out of theme sales...**

Monetization points disappeared.

(` ;  $\omega$  ; `)

and it is

# A matter of life and death

ill||li \_|\_ |○ ill||li

## # 02

Decreased monetization  
effect by original Block  
features.



# Early stage block editors had poor editing capabilities

so

We have developed original blocks with various adjustment functions and layouts,

and

Used them as added value.

Group

A block that groups other blocks

Color settings

Text Color



[Custom color](#)

Cle

Background Color

Solid

Gradient



[Custom color](#)

Cle

Advanced

# However, by the WordPress version upgrade...

- Advanced layouts are now possible with Core blocks and Block Patterns
- Similar functions have been added to the core blocks...

Again,



Monetization points  
disappeared...

(` ; ω ; ` )

## In addition to

- Once released  
Original blocks become an  
**ongoing maintenance burden**

and

- It became necessary to  
**keep a close watch on Gutenberg's  
developments.**

# # 03

CSS output by  
WordPress became  
quite complicated



Probably

Many theme & custom block  
developers are facing this issue?

However,

It is inevitable in the evolution of  
WordPress.

| T - T ) .oO ( I know )

In this way,

The area that theme developers have focused on for monetization is greatly influenced by FSE.

As a result, I feel

It has become difficult to monetize traditional "theme sales"

# Future direction of theme-related business

# How add value and differentiate?



First, we can consider

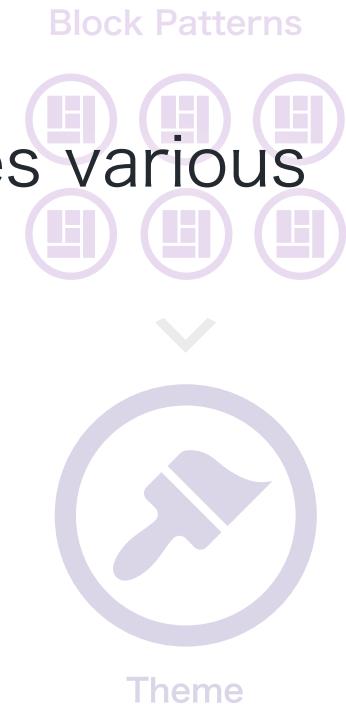
## Differentiation by block patterns

As the easiest way

Selling themes and plugins that includes various block patterns.

However, as mentioned earlier

There is nothing that users cannot create on their own, so it is **weak as a point of monetization.**



The second is

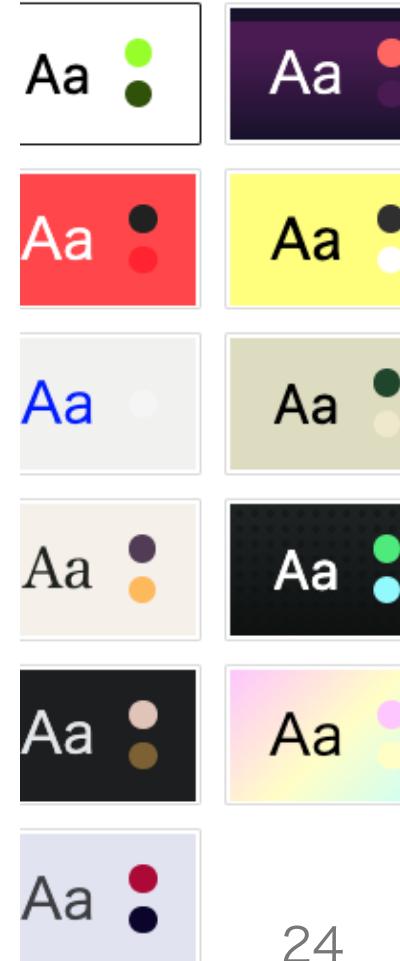
## Differentiation by Global Styles variations.

It is a feature introduced in WordPress 6.0

This feature allows us to create different variations within a single theme.

Browse styles

Choose a different style combination  
theme styles



These

# Block Patterns / Global Style Variations are

Even general users can make it, but...

High quality products created by professional are naturally having high added value.

These are the new extensibility and monetization points that WordPress has provided.

# In our case

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## Before FSE

We used to sell plugins  
that extend the functionality of  
the theme

# However

- Expected to taper off due to less reliance on the theme
- Even if sell only the pattern, it seems to be difficult / because even users have the impression that they can make them on their own.

## in addition to

- We have to move to block themes too

Therefore, currently

We are selling licenses with  
Premium Patterns added

This configuration is

- **User can use both**  
the classic theme and the new block theme
- **Keep existing users by the value of the Premium Patterns**
- **Acquire new users** through the value of our Premium Patterns

and the

Block Patterns is extremely important.

So,  
we published our own  
block pattern directory

This is a site similar to the official pattern directory.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Pattern Library' for WordPress. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Patterns, Usage Methods, and Account. A search bar is also at the top. The main content area has a dark background with abstract geometric shapes. A large heading says 'Copiable Block Patterns Library'. Below it, a sub-headline says 'WordPressのブロックエディタで使えるパターンを公開しています。かじめデザインされたパターンをコピー＆ペーストすることで、見た目そのままご自分のサイトで使っていただくことができます。' There are two buttons: 'View all patterns' and 'View usage methods'. A sidebar on the left lists categories like 'Business' and 'About'. A central search bar allows users to search by keyword or select from a dropdown menu. Below the search bar, there are sections for 'Usage Product' (with a dropdown for 'Select') and 'Category' (with a dropdown for 'Select'). A 'Keywords' section includes a search input field. The bottom half of the page displays several examples of patterns, each with a preview image, a title, and a 'Copy' button. These include a 'Follow-CTA' pattern, a 'Business Full Custom CSS' pattern, a 'Business All-in-one CSS' pattern, a 'Lunch Set Menu' pattern, and a 'Service Flowchart Business All-in-one CSS' pattern.

# Why we created our own pattern directory?



Because

**Still difficult only with core  
blocks,**

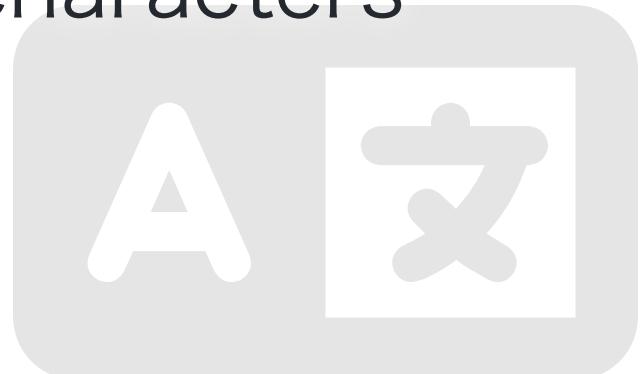
so

I wanted to use my own original blocks  
to provide more practical patterns.

Practical Patterns can be motivates  
people to purchase license.

Second, there is the  
**language problem**

Characters look different in  
English and double-byte characters



## Pricing table

[Buttons](#) [Columns](#) [Featured](#)

For example

Even if  
it looks not bad  
in English but...

Copy pattern

Add to favorites

Default (960px)

Single	Family	Patron
<p>Join our growing community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>General admission and member discounts for one adult</li></ul>	<p>Support special exhibitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>General admission and member discounts for two adults</li></ul>	<p>Take support to the next level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>General admission and member discounts for two</li></ul>

# Japanese



News Download & Extend Learn Community About



Re

## 価格表

Buttons Columns Featured

Copy Pattern

Default (960px)

in Japanese.  
The balance is bad.

個人  
成長するコミュニティをサポート。

- 大人1名の一般入場料と会員割引
- 特別展示ごとに1枚の無料チケ

ファミリー

特別展示を支援。

- 大人2名の一般入場料と会員割引
- 特別展示ごとに4枚の

後援者

次のレベルの支援。

- 大人2名の一般入場料と会員割引
- 特別展示ごとに5枚の無料チケ

The third is  
**the effect of theme style.**  
Even if user paste the .org pattern,  
user need to make adjustments.

For us,  
we need to make an effort to  
get users to continue to license  
even if the dependency of the theme  
decreases.

then,

**How to increase product value?**



At first

## Premium patterns

As the name suggests,

- This patterns available to only paying users.
- The design and sample sentences are more elaborate are ready to use.

Of course  
we provide stylish and common  
patterns but...

Actually,  
Many non-profesional users...

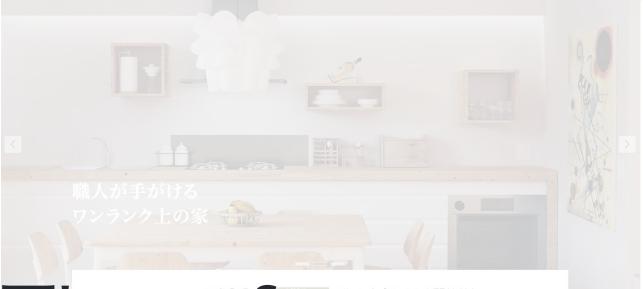
- **Can't think about page structure** in the first step

and

- **They can't think of the sentences to write.**

# Therefore We are Providing a block pattern to create whole page of a specific page for a specific industry.

## Premium patterns



### サンプル工務店のこだわり

自社の職人による施工なので  
納得の価格

#### 01 価格 REASONABLE PRICE

自社スタッフによる施工で、下請け業者にかかる中間マージンが発生しないため、納得のいく価格を  
ご提供できます。  
高い技術力とおまかせのことを一緒に考える専門スタッフが在籍しておりますので、安心してお任せ  
ください。



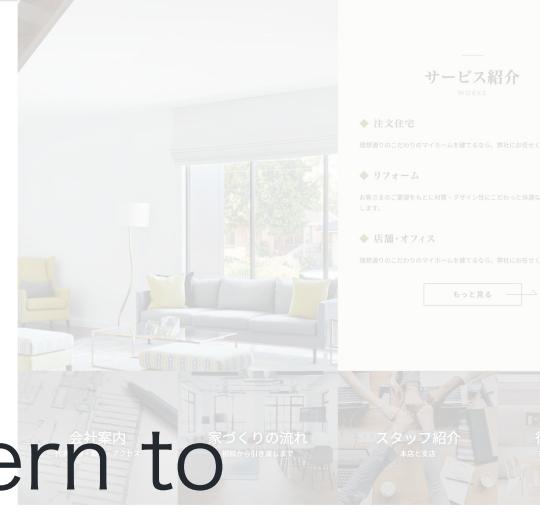
#### 02 技術 SKILL

創業〇〇年。  
磨き抜かれた確かな技術



#### 03 設計 DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

安心して暮らせるために、全ての用意の付属設備にて完備しています。調査したデーターにて正確な  
仕様をご提案させていただきます。



There is

## **For the end user**

They are Just rewrite the text  
to suit their business.

for the

## **Commissioned creation**

By using a pattern as a draft  
of the page,  
the **meeting with the client**  
**becomes smooth**



When providing as a pattern for the entire page including sentences

- Must be in the language of the country / and
- A design optimized for each language is better / Furthermore
- Content and design trends vary by region

**Localized versions** also have the benefit of not competing with English-speaking developers.

Second

## Favorite pattern registration function

This function allows users to register own favorite patterns and **easily recall them.**

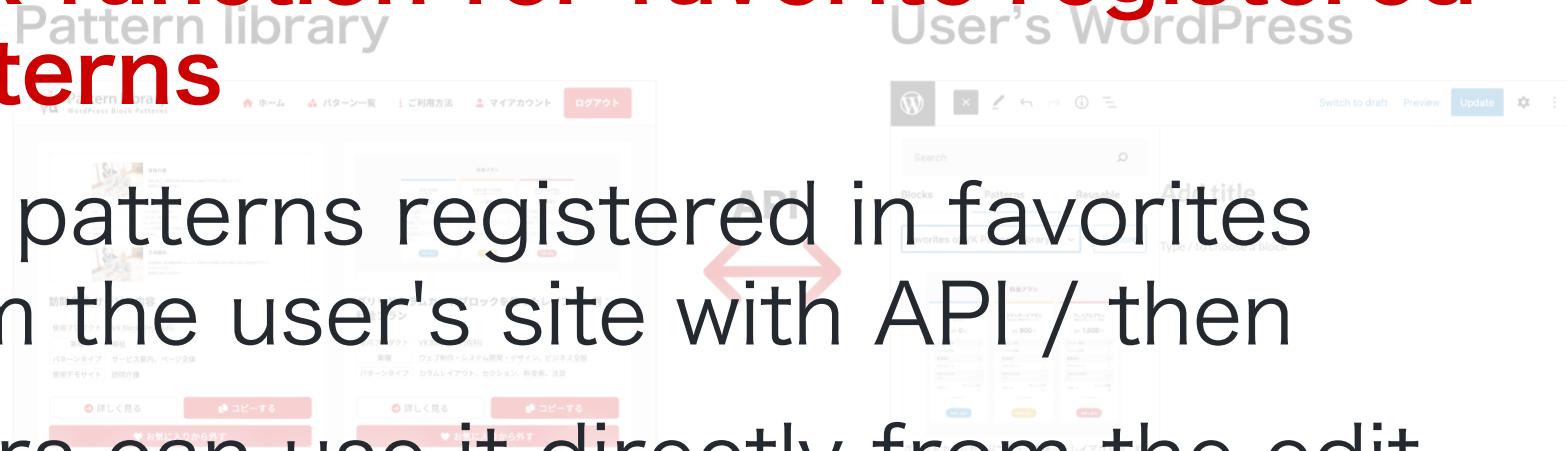


3rd benefit is

## Link function for favorite registered patterns

Call patterns registered in favorites from the user's site with API / then

Users can use it directly from the edit screen of their site



Users can use it directly from the edit screen of their site



**About whether the  
theme business is dead,**

I feel, after all,

## Theme is important

---

Themes and patterns are closely related to the global styles,

Even if

bring in a partial pattern from outside and use it,

there are many cases where there is a problem with the uniformity of the design.

Even in the era of FSE

**Users need good themes and  
highly practical patterns**

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FSE is highly configurable and  
customizable but,

**too much configuration work.**

Actually, it's quite cumbersome to  
make from scratch

# Responsive design compatibility

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Additionally, the website must adapt to different screen sizes.

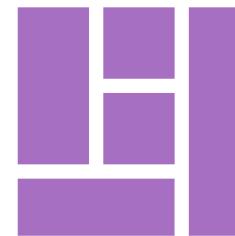
How to control display elements according to screen size?

- With a single screen width, it might be possible to lay out well somehow.
- However, when it comes to **layout on multiple width are actually not that easy.**

I feel it will be difficult to monetize the theme alone, but...

considering  
it as A set with a **value-added  
patterns** are

There will be many business  
opportunities.



**Value-added  
Patterns**

# At the end

What do you think about future theme business?

Please share your opinion

 Twitter

#WCAsia @kurudrive / @kurudrivve\_en

or

 Talk to me! ( with simple words and short sentence )

Thank you