

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.

# Lightning

By Hidekazu Ishikawa



The screenshot shows the Lightning theme's homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links to Global Services, Domestic Services, Our Company, and Contact & Access. Below the navigation is a large header image of a young child wearing a blue ski mask and goggles. Overlaid on the image is a white banner with the text "Johnnijirou On Snow" and "Growing up everyday". Below this is a "READ MORE" button. The main content area has four columns: "For all purposes" (describing the theme as simple and customizable), "Powerful features" (mentioning the "All in One Extension Unit three" plugin), "Surprising easy" (describing the ease of use), and "Recent Posts" (listing recent posts like "Launch of new product!", "Marketing convention report", and "Some post about IT").

In 2015  
I published Theme Lightning on wordpress.org

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

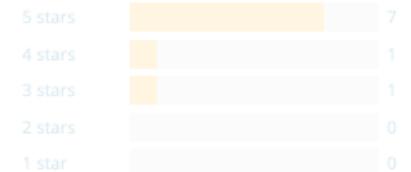
PHP Version: 5.6.0 or higher

Theme Homepage →

Ratings

See all >

★★★★★ 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". To the right is a heart icon. Below the header, there's a navigation bar with links for "About", "Service", "Design Sample", "Information", and "Contact". On the left, there's a sidebar with a logo and the text "X-T9 WordPress Theme Experimental WordPress Block Theme". The main content area features a large, stylized graphic of a star or arrow pointing upwards. Overlaid on this graphic is the text "Let's embark on a new journey" and some placeholder text ("Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua."). To the right of the main content, there are several buttons: "Preview" (gray), "Download" (blue), "Version: 1.3.4", "Last updated: December 23, 2022", "Active Installations: 200+", "WordPress Version: 6.1 or higher", "PHP Version: 7.2 or higher", and a link "Theme Homepage →". Below the main content, there's a section titled "Style variations" showing four different color schemes for the "Aa" text. To the right, there's a rating section with a "See all >" button and a chart showing the number of reviews for each star rating (5 stars: 0, 4 stars: 0, 3 stars: 0, 2 stars: 0, 1 star: 0). At the bottom right is a "Add my review" button.

like me, Business model of theme authors is

Create and sell

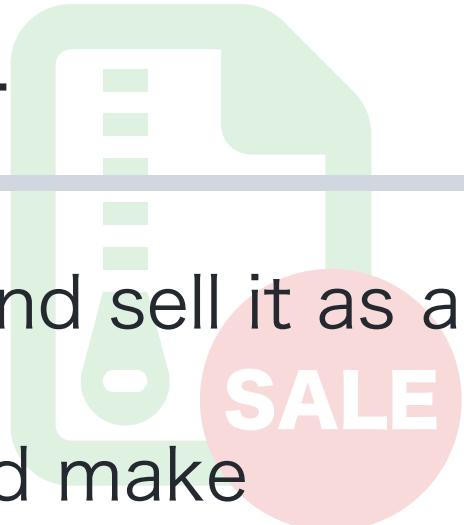
Premium Themes and Plugins

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 >

Background Image >

Widgets >

Wide >

Homepage Settings >

Additional CSS >

# Before FSE

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

Lightning Header Top Settings >

Lightning Header Setting >

Lightning Campaign Text >

Lightning Archive Page Setting >

Lightning Footer settings >

Lightning Copyright Setting >

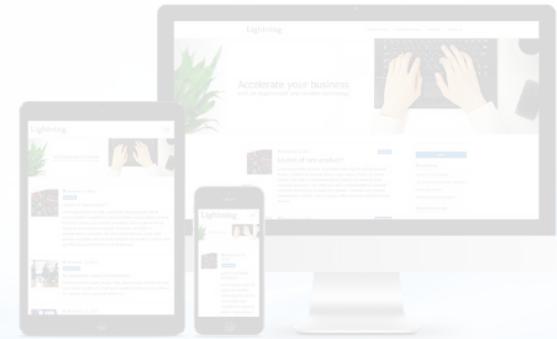
Lightning Mobile Nav >

Lightning Mobile Fix Nav >

Lightning Font Awesome >

## Accelerate your business

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



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.

This makes it much less dependent on the  
theme.



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

Monetization points disappeared.

(` ; ω ; ` )

and it is

# A matter of life and death

illilli \_ [ ] | O illilli

## # 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

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.

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

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

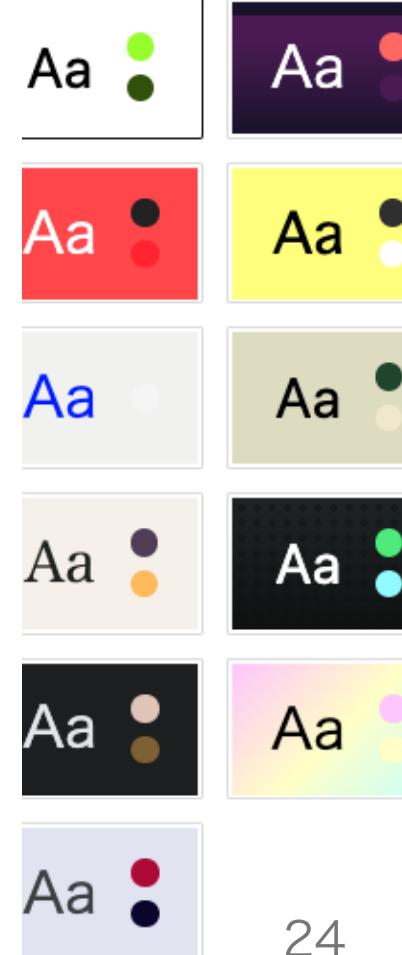
# Differentiation by Global Styles variations.

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.

Pattern Library  
WordPress Block Patterns



使用プロダクト  
レ 指定なし

タイプ  
ショット (116)  
CTA (11) Q&A (5) カラムレイアウト (41) スタッフ紹介 (5) スライダー (5) テキスト (2) ヒーローエリア (10)  
ボタン (4) メニュー (9) レビュー (3) 地図 (1) 料金表 (8) 注目 (1) 流れ (11) 表 (3) 製品紹介 (3)  
ミーム/パターン (59)  
ジ全体 (46)  
104 (1) サービス案内 (7) トップページ・LP (6) プライバシーポリシー (1) 会社案内 (5) 採用情報 (3)

サイト  
レ キーワード  
キーワードを入力

入りで絞り込む  
入り機能は登録ユーザー専用です。[詳細はこちら...](#)

検索

ビジネスカード

ストを実現してます

バック\_ビジネス全般\_カスタムCSS

使用プロダクト: VK Blocks Pro(有料)、カスタムCSS  
業種: ビジネス  
パターンタイプ: CTA  
イフ: セクション

詳しく見る コピーする

フォローCTA

使用プロダクト: VK Blocks、カスタムCSS  
業種: ブログ  
パターンタイプ: CTA

詳しく見る コピーする

広告付き目次ブロック

使用プロダクト: VK Blocks Pro(有料)  
業種: ブログ

詳しく見る コピーする

QRコード

使用プロダクト: VK Blocks Pro(有料)、カスタムCSS  
業種: ビジネス  
パターンタイプ: CTA  
イフ: セクション

詳しく見る コピーする

ランチセットメニュー

使用プロダクト: VK Blocks Pro(有料)、カスタムCSS  
業種: 食飲  
パターンタイプ: ニュース  
イフ: ディレクション

詳しく見る コピーする

サービスの流れ横並び\_ビジネス全般

使用プロダクト: VK Blocks Pro(有料)、カスタムCSS  
業種: ビジネス  
パターンタイプ: カラムレイアウト、セクション

詳しく見る コピーする

So,  
we published our own block  
pattern directory

This is a site similar to the  
official pattern directory.

# Why we created our own pattern directory?

Because

**Still difficult only with core blocks**

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

Copy Pattern

Add to favorites

For example

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

### Single

Enrich our  
growing  
community.

- General admission and member discounts for one adult

### Family

Support special exhibitions.

- General admission and member discounts for two adults

### Patron

Take support to the next level.

- General admission and member discounts for two adults

# 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.

( Acquisition of new users )

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

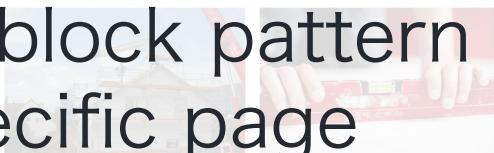
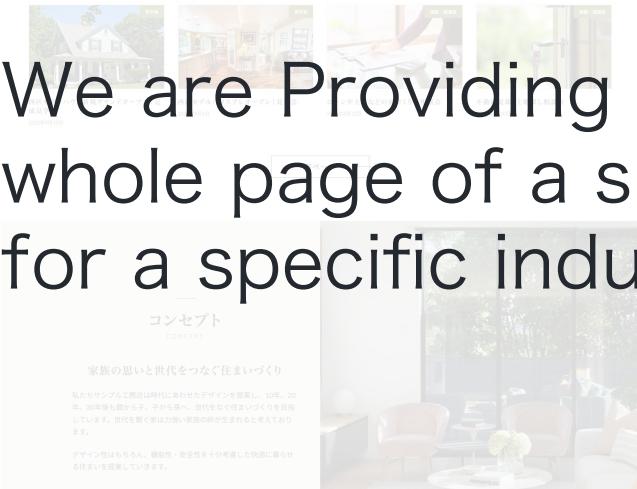
and

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

# Premium patterns

# Therefore

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



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

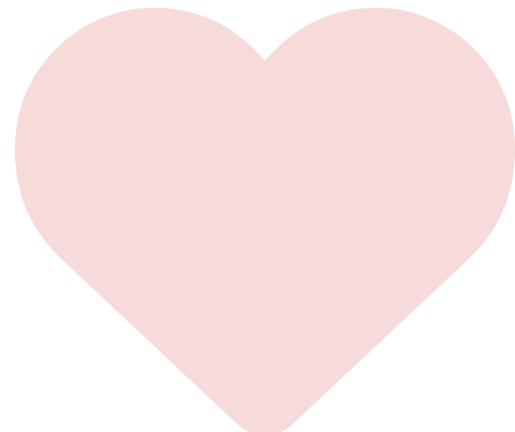
- Must be in the language of the country / and
- A design optimized for each language is better / Furthermore
- Content and design trends vary by region
- Localized versions also have the benefit of not competing with English-speaking developers.

**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.

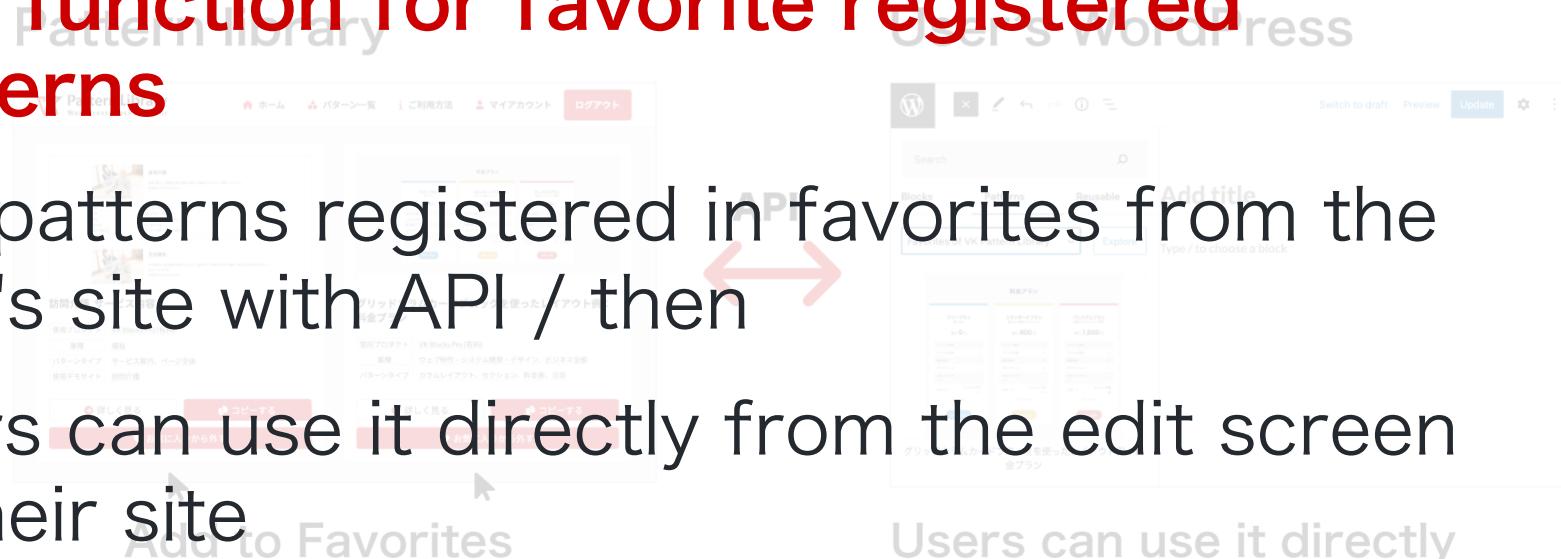


3rd benefit is

## 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

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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, **Know how to use** **Can create designs**

**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