WordPress Launch Master Handout

Hartford WordPress Meetup - March 2026

Part 1: The Strategy Phase

- Define Launch Type: New site, same-domain redesign, or new-domain migration.
- Prioritize SEO: Redesigns must focus on 301 redirects and content freezes.
- Migration Complexity: New domains add DNS and email continuity risks.
- Rollback Plan: Document exactly how to revert via DNS or backup restoration.
- The "Friday Rule": Avoid Friday launches; target Tuesday/Wednesday mornings for support access.

Part 2: Phase 1 - Preflight (Before Launch)

- Placeholder Purge: Delete "Lorem Ipsum," sample posts, and demo pages.
- Navigation Audit: Verify all menu and footer links for "dead ends".
- Plugin/Theme Audit: Delete unused code to reduce security risks.
- Admin Hygiene: Enforce least-privilege and remove temporary accounts.
- URL Search & Replace: Safely swap dev/staging URLs for the live domain.
- Email SMTP: Configure a provider so notifications and password resets deliver.
- Redirect Mapping: Finalize a 301 redirect map for all changed legacy URLs.

Part 3: Phase 2 - The Launch Sequence (The Flip)

- Safety Snapshots: Full backup of the old live site and the new build.
- Content Freeze: Pause all edits on the old site during transition.
- HTTPS Enforcement: Confirm SSL is active and force HTTPS to avoid mixed content.
- DNS Cutover: Update A/AAAA or Nameserver records and monitor propagation.
- Permalink Flush: Save Settings > Permalinks twice to refresh rewrite rules.
- SEO Activation: Uncheck "Discourage search engines from indexing this site".

Part 4: Phase 3 - Post-Launch Smoke Test

- Smoke Test Essentials: Test contact forms, search bars, and critical user paths.
- Console Audit: Check for JavaScript errors or blocked assets in the browser.
- Mobile Verification: Verify menus and layouts function on real mobile devices.
- Analytics & Search Console: Confirm tracking is live and submit the new sitemap.

Part 5: Compliance & Professional Handover

- Legal Compliance: Ensure privacy policy and accessibility statements are live.
- Website Owner Guide: Provide documentation for content edits, backups, and support.
- Maintenance Routine: Set a schedule for core, plugin, and theme updates.