

COMPARING THE SUCCESS RATE OF SOLO ENTREPRENEUR BUSINESSES USING FIVE PROMINENT WEBSITE BUILDING PLATFORMS

In 2017, SiteSell decided to study the state of online solopreneurship, to determine how well each of the major site-building platforms performed in terms of helping their customers create successful online businesses.

This special report discusses the methodology, results, and findings of those five studies. It represents the first study of its kind to take a close look inside the world of online businesses.

DEFINING AND MEASURING SUCCESS

There are many ways to define success when it comes to starting and running any business. Some can be measured objectively, like financial success. Others are more subjective, like happiness, fulfilling a lifelong goal, or personal growth.

Unless a business is a public company that reports earnings every quarter, measuring financial success is impractical. Subjective success factors are equally impractical for research purposes. Researchers would have to interview thousands of business owners to gain any useful data.

This applies to offline and online businesses. Fortunately, there's one metric about online businesses that:

- is practical to collect
- is reliable
- is reproducible
- correlates well with overall success.

That metric is measuring visitor traffic to the business's website.

This data can be collected by asking individual site owners to provide access to their Google Analytics or other traffic-measurement service. But researchers would need to contact tens of thousands of site owners to request access.

The other option is to sample a very large subset of the population and then extrapolate the data to reflect reality.

METHODOLOGY

To ensure that each study could be replicated easily by anyone, SiteSell used industry standard tools and services that are free to use.

These included:

- Whois Domain tools, to find sites hosted on the same nameservers
- BuiltWith, to find sites built with the same platform (in the case of WordPress-built sites, which are hosted across dozens of nameservers)
- Alexa, as a data source to determine traffic to each site (Alexa is no longer available; Amazon discontinued it in December 2022)
- SimilarWeb (SW), as a second data source to determine traffic to each site
- SEMrush, as a third data source platform to determine traffic to each site.

Get the tools

whois.domaintools.com
builtwith.com
Alexa (discontinued)
similarweb.com
semrush.com

Five studies compared traffic numbers of Solo Build It! (SBI!)-built web business sites, with an equivalent number of sites built using Wix, GoDaddy, WordPress, Squarespace, and Wealthy Affiliate (which uses WordPress as its platform).

Traffic Measurement

Alexa and SimilarWeb both rank websites from #1 – the site with the most traffic (Google.com) to 20,000,000 (Alexa) and 30,000,000 (SimilarWeb). SEMrush reports actual traffic numbers instead of rankings.

Alexa and SimilarWeb use *indirect* measurement methods, which have two observed limitations:

1. Scatter.

This is the deviation of actual traffic from the traffic numbers derived by a sampling technique. It increases if the technique has a small sample set of users that it tracks.

Both Alexa and SimilarWeb use huge sample sets. The more traffic a site receives, the lower the scatter (relative to the traffic). The less traffic a site has, the higher the scatter.

Since these studies measured tens of thousands of sites for each site-builder platform, scatter tended to average out at close to 0.

2. Sampling bias.

The act of sampling can introduce a traffic over-estimation for sites that receive visitors who are more likely to be exposed to the sampling source.

For example, if SimilarWeb tracked data from an ISP in Canada as its main source, Canadian news sites would suddenly appear to "become" the most visited sites in the world.

SiteSell researchers devised these studies to reduce both scatter and sampling bias.

They achieved this by using very large subsets of the total number of websites, and by using the actual traffic measurements reported by SEMrush.

If the results of each of the three confirms the findings of the other two, then sampling bias is greatly reduced. This increases confidence in the traffic estimate for a single site. Across thousands of sites, the traffic estimates become indisputable.

Data Collection and Measurement Processes

The process started by finding all domain names either hosted on the same nameserver (for example, all Wealthy Affiliate sites are hosted on NS1.MYWAHOSTING.COM and NS2.MYWAHOSTING.COM), or by using lists of sites from BuiltWith.



Out of millions of domain names scanned, we examined over 462,000 to find enough websites to compare to Solo Build It!-built sites and achieve a high level of confidence in the results.

We then reduced the list of domain names for each builder to a list of "Real Effort" sites, which eliminated any sites that:

- 1. redirected to another site
- 2. were placeholders (e.g., under construction, not yet configured, etc.)
- 3. were unreachable or did not resolve.

To be considered a Real Effort site, the remainder had to have a home page and at least five links to internal pages on the same domain name.

Roughly 50% – 60% of all sites were considered Real Effort sites.

After finding the Real Effort sites for each service provider, a manual review of 500 randomly selected websites confirmed that the Real Effort filter had selected similar types of sites as Solo Build It!-built sites.



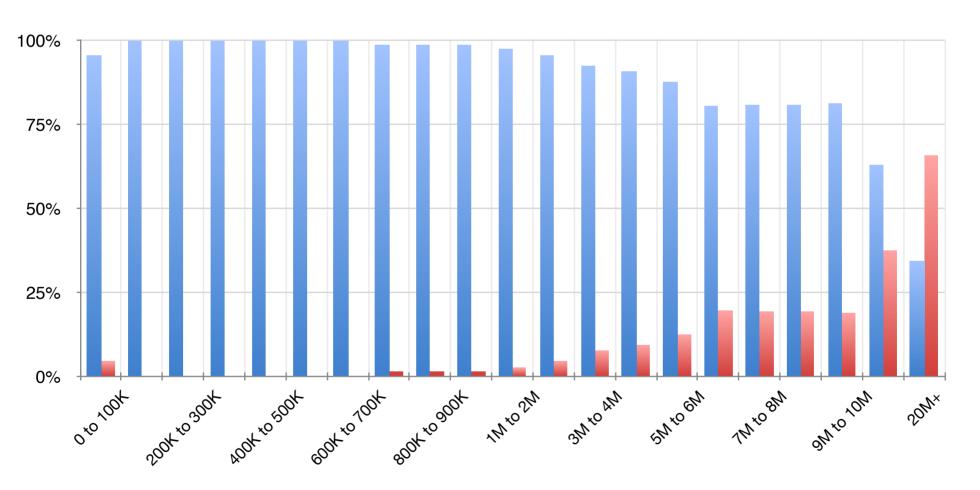
RESULTS OF EACH STUDY

Wix

It took a review of 190,077 Wix domain names to find 10,000 Real Effort websites. In other words, only 5% of Wix websites meet the Real Effort definition (discussed above). This compares to 92% of all Solo Build It! sites.

Wix vs Solo Build It! Results: Alexa

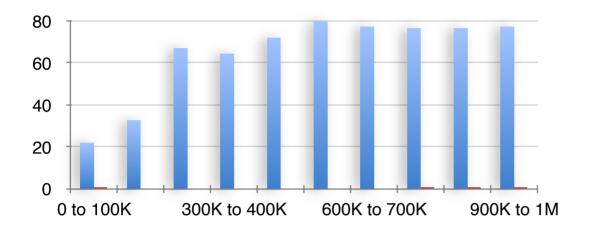
The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and Wix (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100 K up to 20 M +).



Left is higher ranking (more traffic) - Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

Wix vs. Solo Build It! results: Alexa (cont'd)

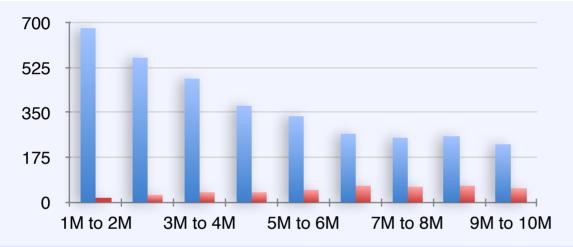
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Wix (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

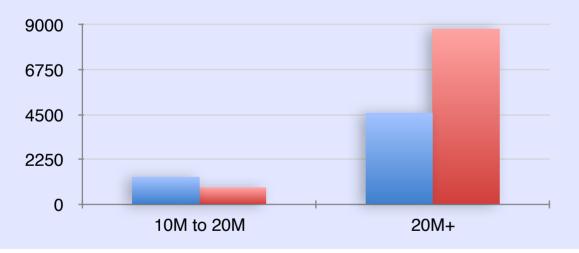
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



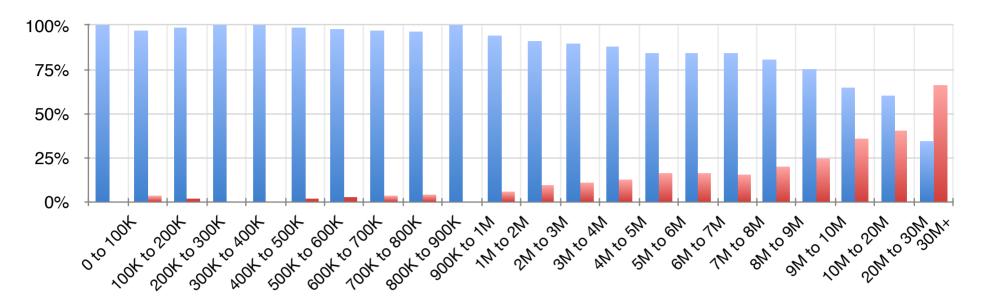
Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

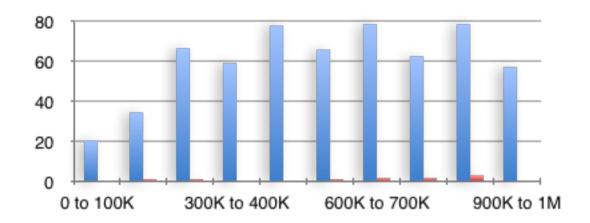
Wix vs. Solo Build It! Results: SimilarWeb

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and Wix (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 30M).



Left is higher ranking (more traffic) - Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Wix (red) in three traffic ranges.



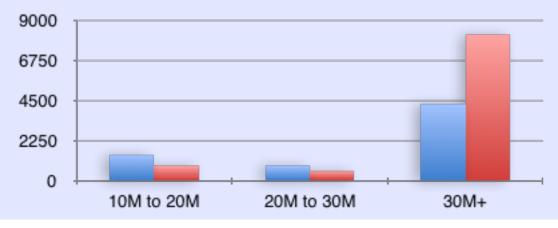
Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range
Left is higher ranking (more traffic)
Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

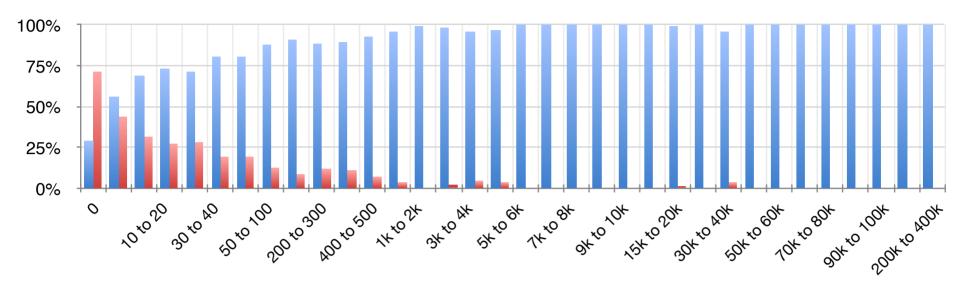


Poor to Invisible

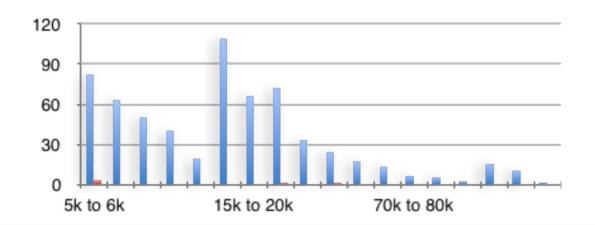
Traffic Range
Left is higher ranking (more traffic)
Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

Wix vs. Solo Build It! Results: SEMrush

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and Wix (red) for each traffic level. **Important Note:** While Alexa and SimilarWeb rankings improve by moving from right to left, SEMrush traffic numbers improve by moving from left to right.

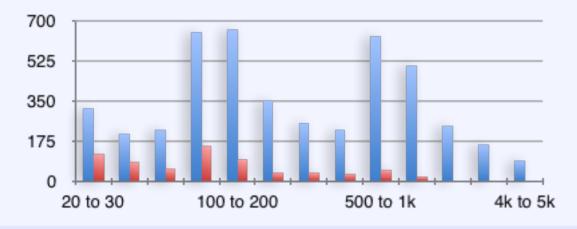


The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Wix (red) in three traffic ranges.



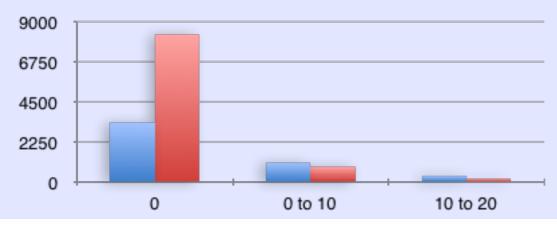
Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range
Right is higher ranking (more traffic)
Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium Traffic Range

Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range
Right is higher ranking (more traffic)
Left is lower ranking (less traffic)

Wix vs. Solo Build It! Results: Final Analysis



Solo Build It! websites are 115 times (115X) more likely to achieve "Outstanding - Excellent" levels of traffic than Wix.



Solo Build It! websites are 7.1 times (7.1X) more likely to achieve "Medium" levels of traffic than Wix.



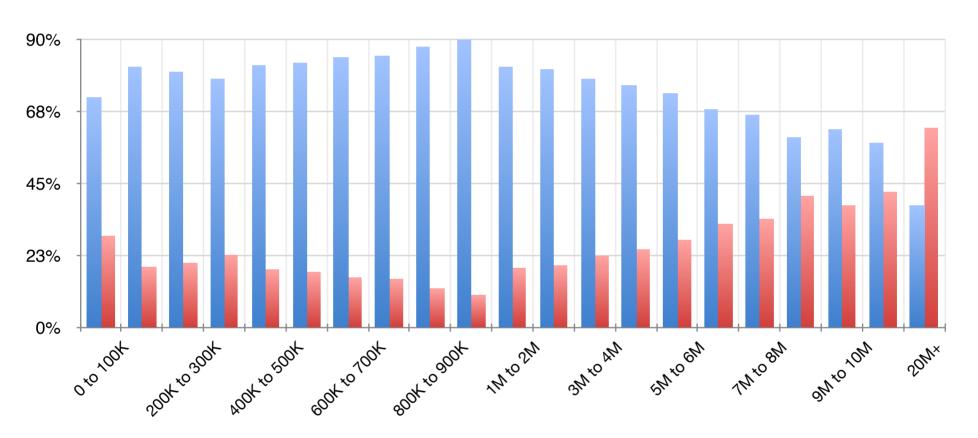
84% of Wix Real Effort websites are Invisible. Solo Build It!'s "Invisible" rate is 40%.

WordPress

It took a review of 24,000 domain names to find 10,000 Real Effort websites built with WordPress. In other words, only 41% of WordPress websites meet the Real Effort definition (discussed above). This compares to 92% of all Solo Build It! sites.

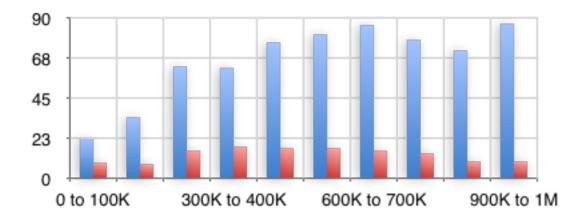
WordPress vs. Solo Build It! Results: Alexa

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and WordPress (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 10M +).



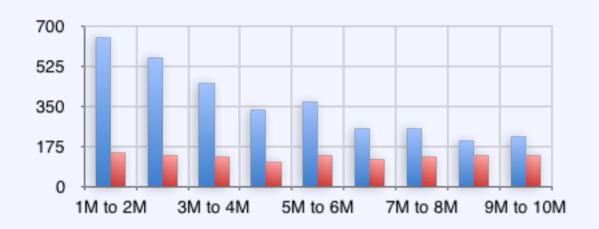
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) - Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and WordPress (red) in three traffic ranges.



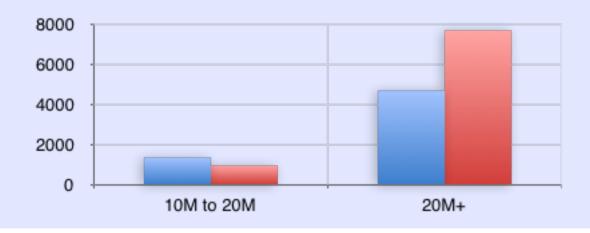
Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

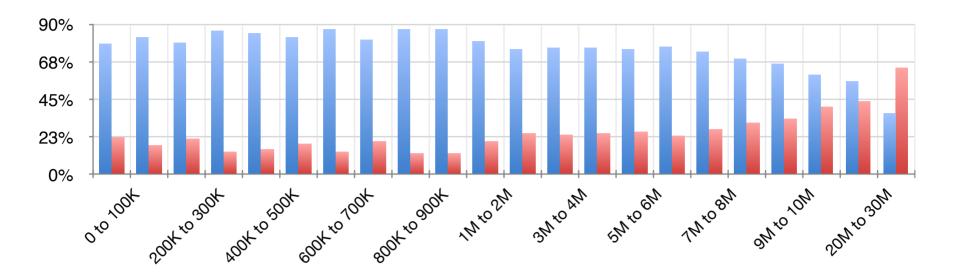


Poor to Invisible

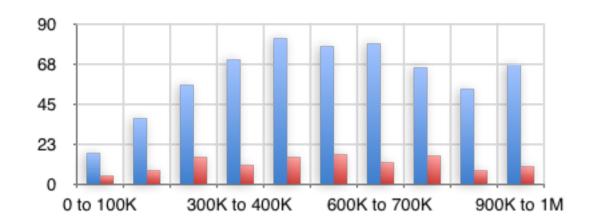
Traffic Range
Left is higher ranking (more traffic)
Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

WordPress vs. Solo Build It! Results: SimilarWeb

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and WordPress (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 30M).

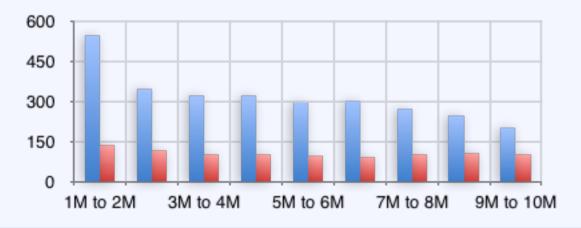


The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and WordPress (red). in three traffic ranges.



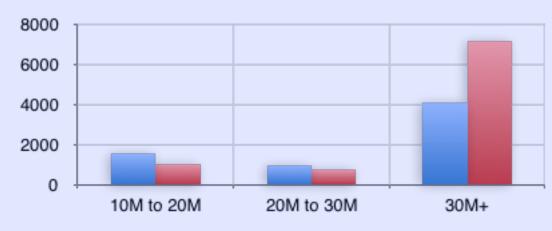
Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range
Left is higher ranking (more traffic)
Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

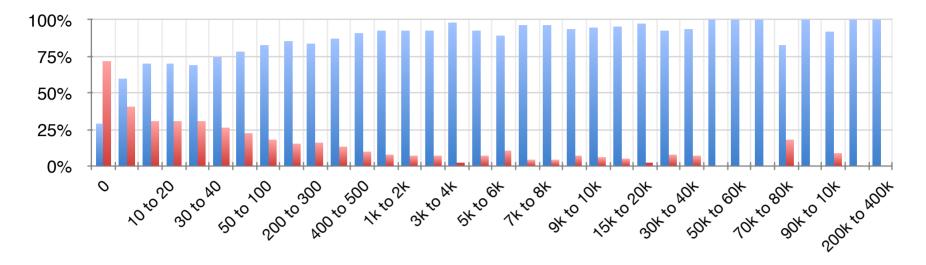


Poor to Invisible

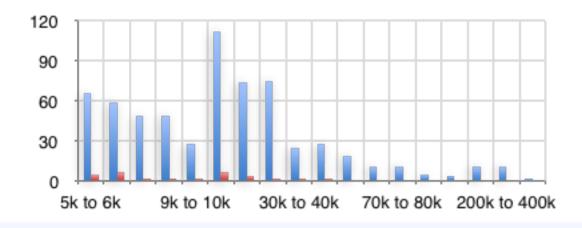
Traffic Range
Left is higher ranking (more traffic)
Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

WordPress vs. Solo Build It! Results: SEMrush

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and WordPress (red) for each traffic level. **Important Note:** While Alexa and SimilarWeb rankings improve by moving from right to left, SEMrush traffic numbers improve by moving from left to right.

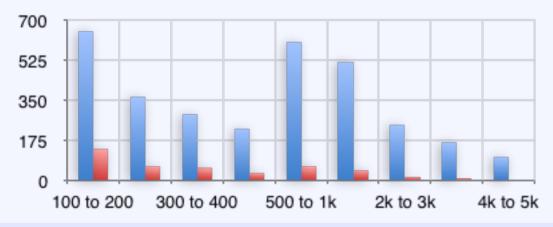


The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and WordPress (red) in three traffic ranges.



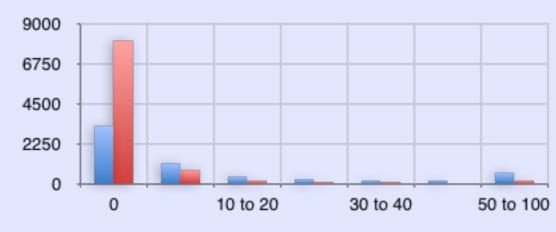
Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range
Right is higher ranking (more traffic)
Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium Traffic Range

Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range
Right is higher ranking (more traffic)
Left is lower ranking (less traffic)

WordPress vs. Solo Build It! Results: Final Analysis



Solo Build It! websites are 9 times (9X) more likely to achieve "Outstanding - Excellent" levels of traffic than WordPress.



Solo Build It! websites are 3.6 times (3.6X) more likely to achieve "Medium" levels of traffic than WordPress.



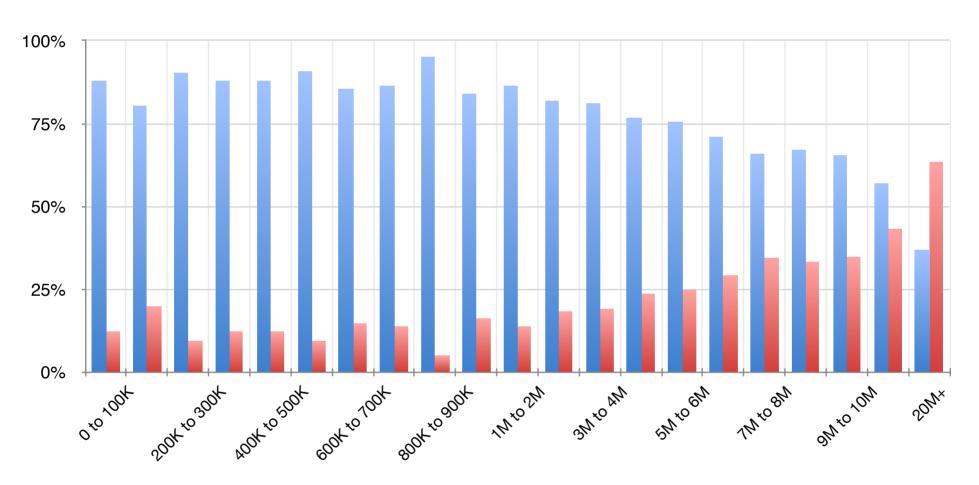
76.4% of WordPress Real Effort websites are Invisible. Solo Build It!'s "Invisible" rate is 40%.

GoDaddy

It took a review of 195,000 GoDaddy domain names to find 10,000 Real Effort websites. In other words, only 5% of GoDaddy websites meet the Real Effort definition (discussed above). This compares to 92% of all Solo Build It! sites.

GoDaddy vs. Solo Build It! results: Alexa

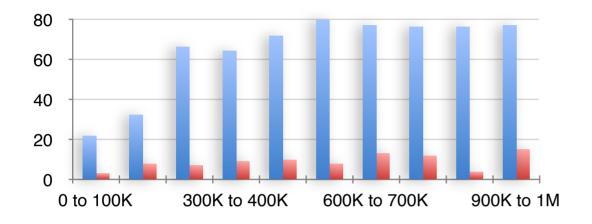
The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and GoDaddy (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 20M +).



Left is higher ranking (more traffic) - Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

GoDaddy vs. Solo Build It! results: Alexa (cont'd)

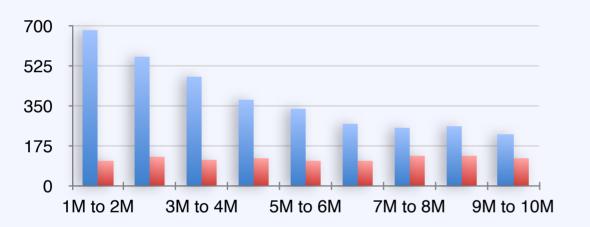
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and GoDaddy (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

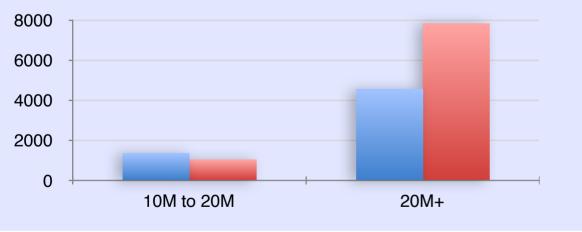
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



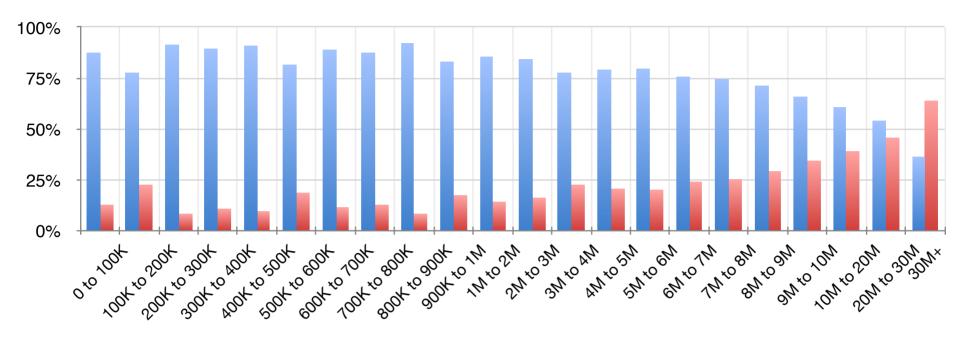
Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

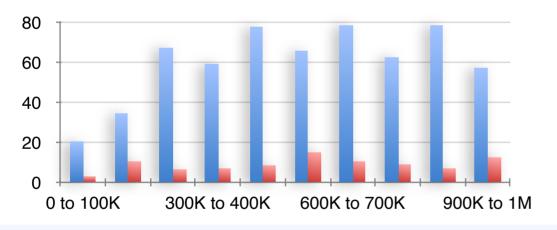
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

GoDaddy vs Solo Build It! results: SimilarWeb

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and GoDaddy (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 30M).



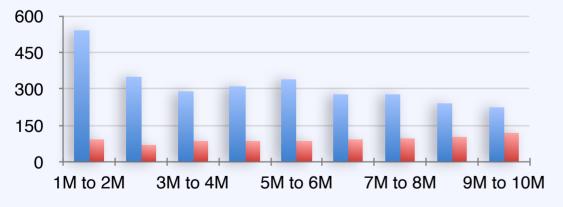
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and GoDaddy (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

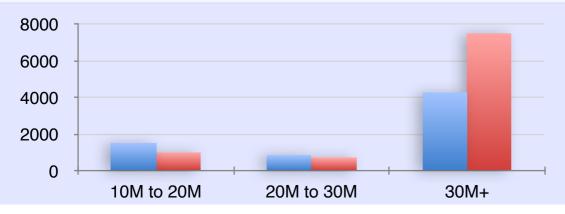
Left is higher ranking (more traffic)
Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



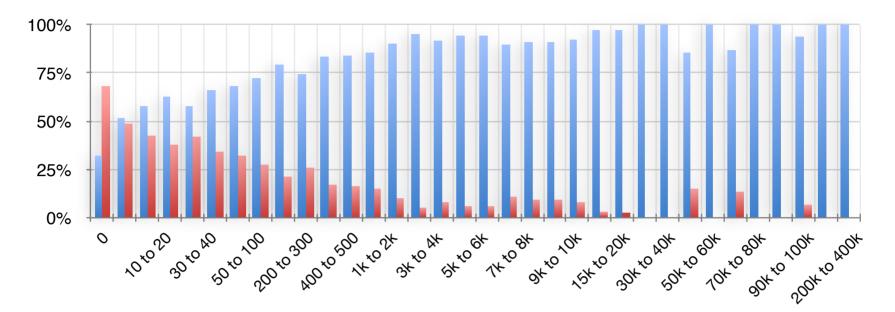
Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

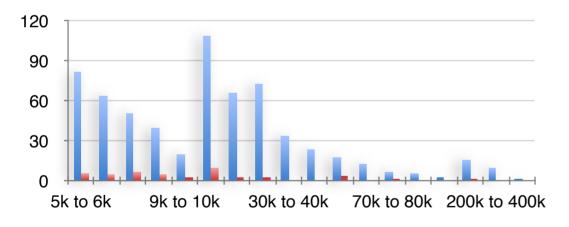
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

GoDaddy vs Solo Build It! results: SEMrush

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and GoDaddy (red) for each traffic level. **Important Note:** While Alexa and SimilarWeb rankings improve by moving from right to left, SEMrush traffic numbers improve by moving from left to right.



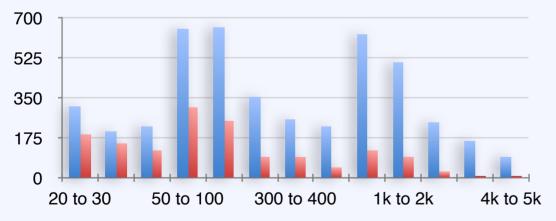
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and GoDaddy (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

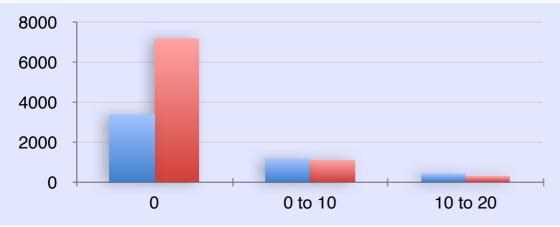
Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)

GoDaddy Final Analysis



Solo Build It! websites are 10 times (10X) more likely to achieve "Outstanding - Excellent" levels of traffic than GoDaddy.



Solo Build It! websites are 3.7 times (3.7X) more likely to achieve "Medium" levels of traffic than GoDaddy.



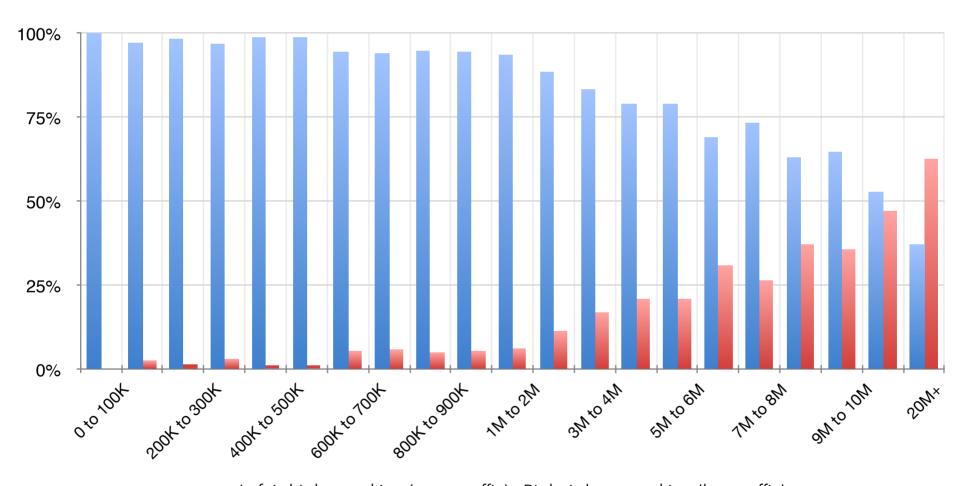
74% of GoDaddy Real Effort websites are Invisible. Solo Build It!'s "Invisible" rate is 40%.

Squarespace

It took a review of 20,828 Squarespace domain names to find 10,000 Real Effort websites. In other words, only 48% of Squarespace websites meet the Real Effort definition (discussed above). This compares to 92% of all Solo Build It! sites.

Squarespace results: Alexa

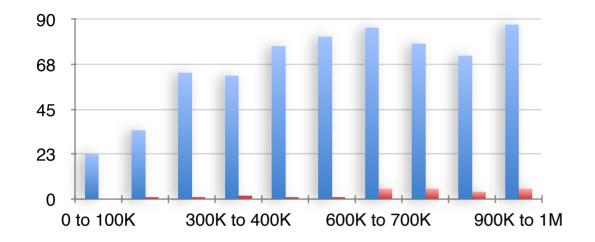
The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and Squarespace (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 20M +).



Left is higher ranking (more traffic) - Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

Squarespace vs. Solo Build It! results: Alexa (cont'd)

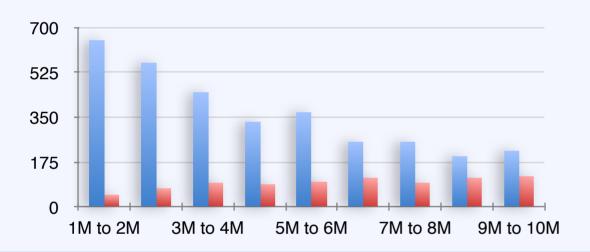
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Squarespace (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

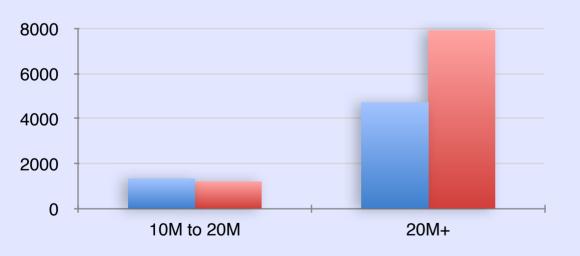
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



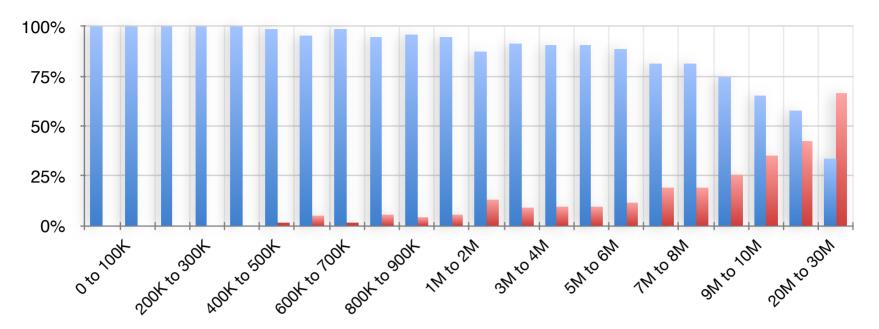
Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

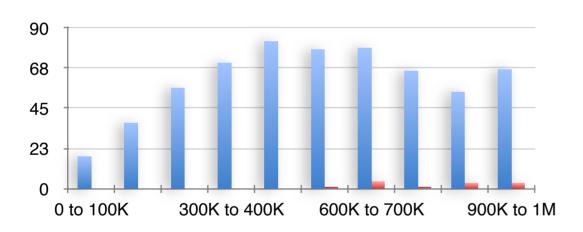
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

Squarespace vs. Solo Build It! results: SimilarWeb

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and Squarespace (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 30M).



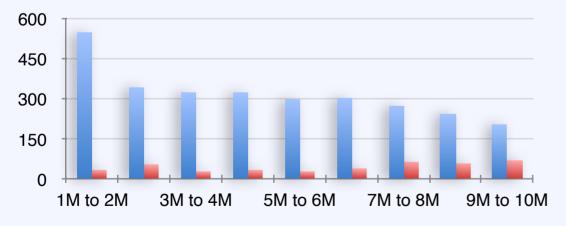
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Squarespace (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

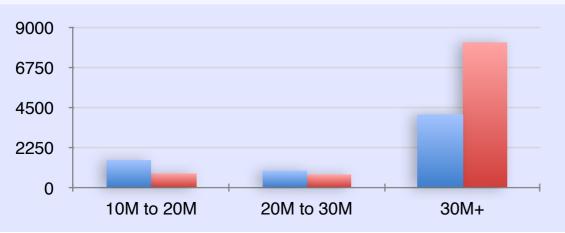
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



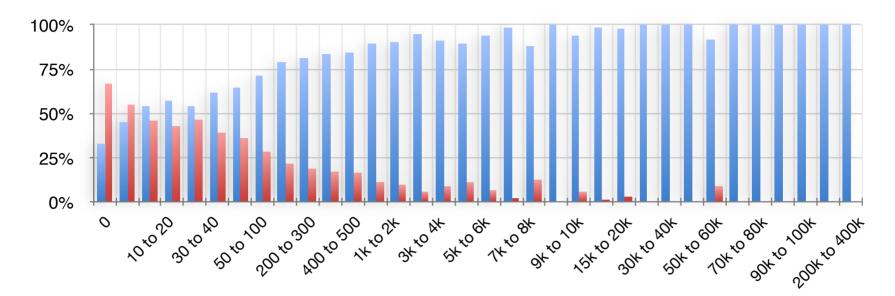
Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

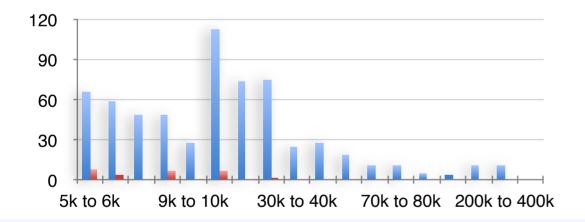
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

Squarespace results: SEMrush

The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Squarespace (red) for each traffic level. **Important Note:** While Alexa and SimilarWeb rankings improve by moving from right to left, SEMrush traffic numbers improve by moving from left to right.



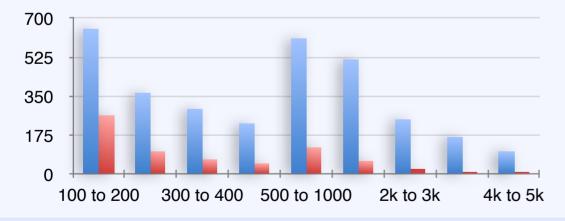
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Squarespace (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

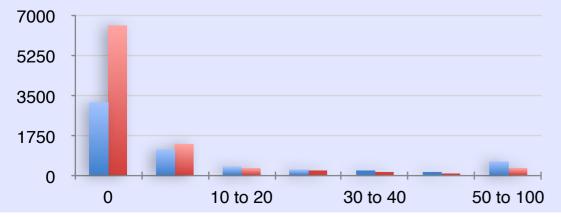
Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)

Squarespace Final Analysis



Solo Build It! websites are 32.5 times (32.5X) more likely to achieve "Outstanding - Excellent" levels of traffic than Squarespace.



Solo Build It! websites are 5.2 times (5.2X) more likely to achieve "Medium" levels of traffic than Squarespace.



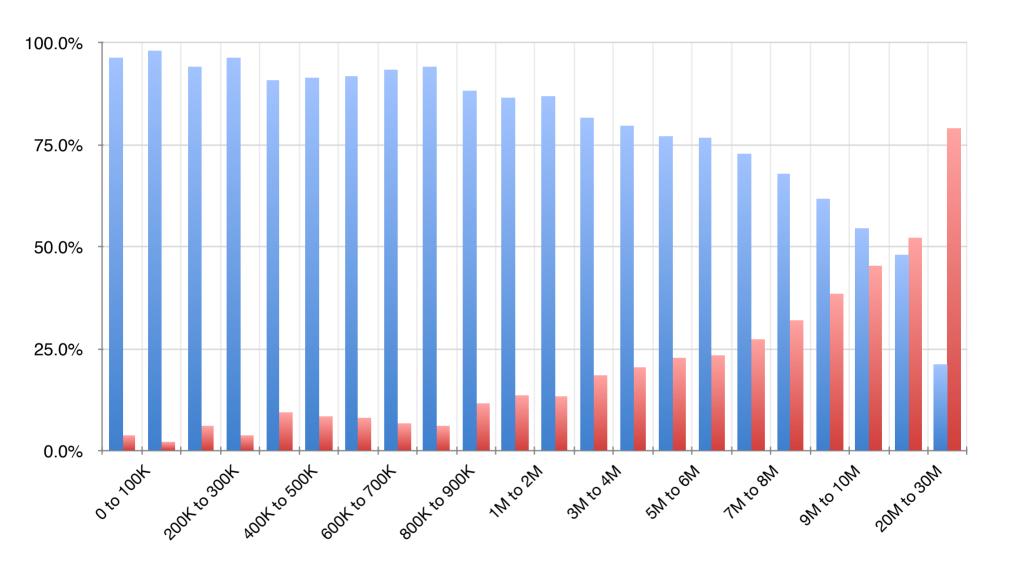
75.4% of Squarespace Real Effort websites are Invisible. Solo Build It!'s "Invisible" rate is 40%.

Wealthy Affiliate

Of 32,582 Wealthy Affiliate domain names, 16,814 are Real Effort websites. In other words, only 51.6% of Wealthy Affiliate websites meet the Real Effort definition (discussed above). This compares to 92% of all Solo Build It! sites.

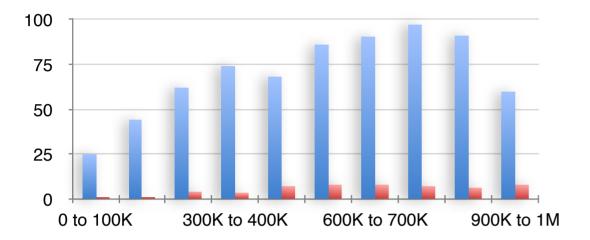
Wealthy Affiliate results: Alexa

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and Wealthy Affiliate (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 30M +).



Left is higher ranking (more traffic) - Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

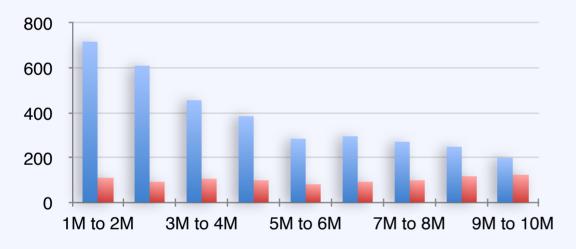
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Wealthy Affiliate (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

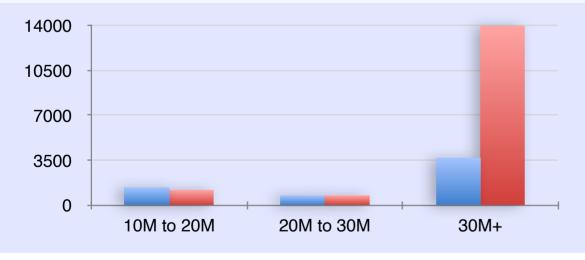
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



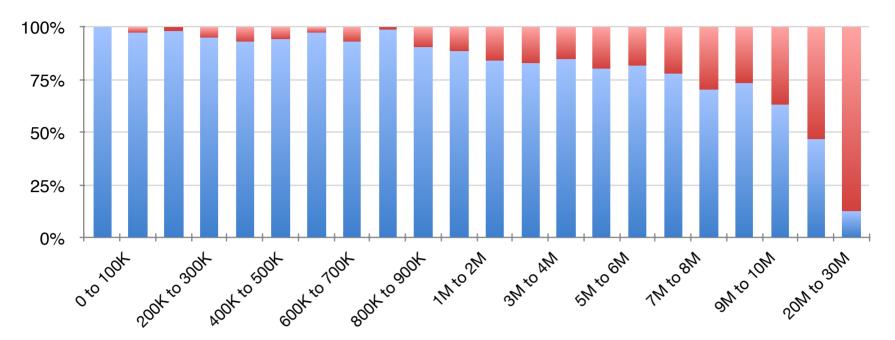
Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

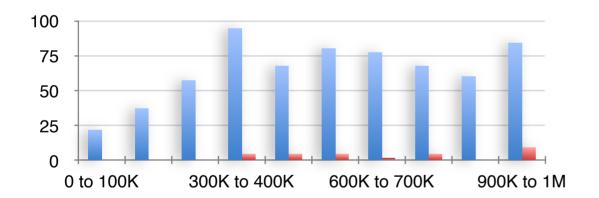
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)

Wealthy Affiliate results: SimilarWeb

The chart below gives the percentage of sites from Solo Build It! (blue) and Wealthy Affiliate (red) for each traffic ranking (0-100K up to 30M). **Note:** A stacked column was required to be able to display results due to the gap between the two being compared.



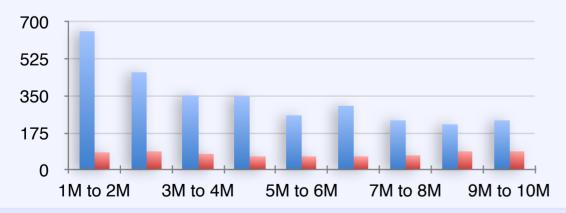
The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Wealthy Affiliate (red) in three traffic ranges.



Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range

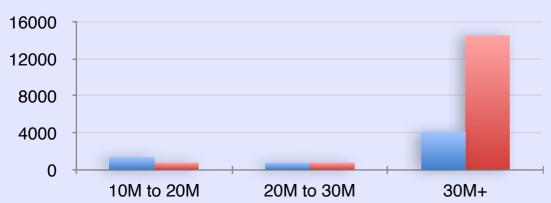
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium

Traffic Range

Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic)



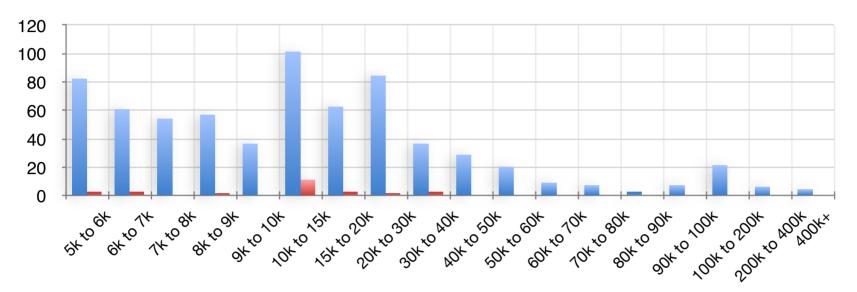
Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range

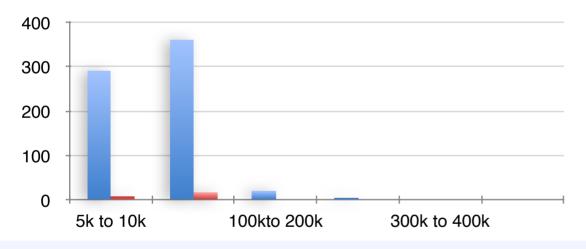
Left is higher ranking (more traffic) Right is lower ranking (less traffic

Wealthy Affiliate results: SEMrush

The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Wealthy Affilliate (red) for each traffic level. **Important Note:** While Alexa and SimilarWeb rankings improve by moving from right to left, SEMrush traffic numbers improve by moving from left to right.

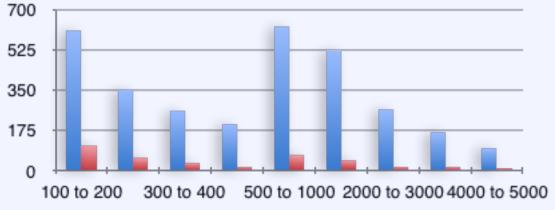


The next three charts display the number of sites for both Solo Build It! (blue) and Wealthy Affiliate (red) in three traffic ranges.



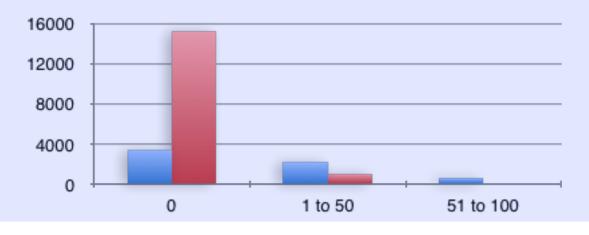
Outstanding to Excellent

Traffic Range
Right is higher ranking (more traffic)
Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Medium Traffic Range

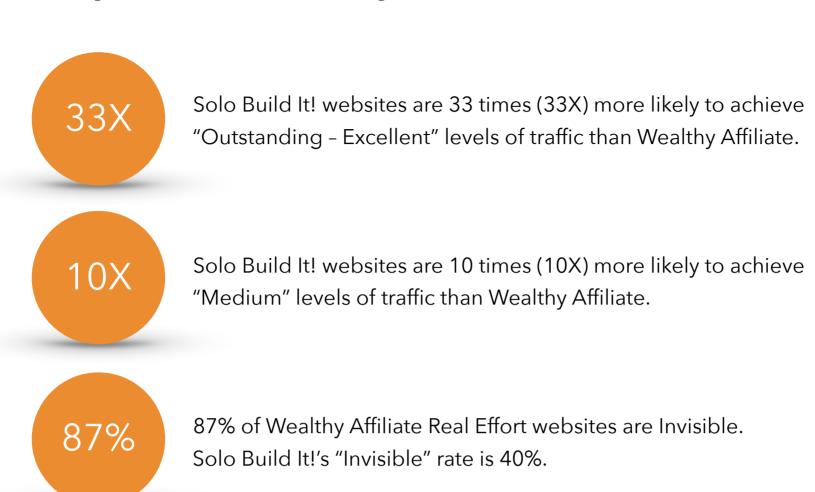
Right is higher ranking (more traffic) Left is lower ranking (less traffic)



Poor to Invisible

Traffic Range
Right is higher ranking (more traffic)
Left is lower ranking (less traffic)

Wealthy Affiliate Final Analysis



CONCLUSIONS

When examining the highest traffic levels, web businesses that were built using the Solo Build It! platform outperformed all five builders tested by at least 9x. Solo Build It! is...





Hypothesis

Is there a reason for Solo Build It! members' success compared to users of Wix, Squarespace, GoDaddy, WordPress and Wealthy Affiliate?

It's not that Solo Build It! is an all-in-one platform. Wix and Squarespace are platforms that provide similar types of tools, or integrate with third-party tools that offer similar functionality.

It's not that Solo Build It! has an integrated keyword research tool. Wealthy Affiliate provides access to a sister product, which allows its users to do keyword research. And there are many third-party add-ons, plug-ins and cloud services available that provide similar functionality to users of any building platform.

It's not even instructional training. Each one of these platforms offer guides, documentation, how-to videos and articles on how to build a website or blog, social media strategies, marketing, etc.

And yet over 75% of the almost 60,000 sites studied had so little traffic that they were essentially invisible on the Web.

There are two distinct differences between the five builders and Solo Build It! that can explain the wide gap in success.

The first is the type, quality, and delivery method of the educational information. The second is the type and quality of support members receive.

1) Solo Build It!'s platform is an integrated and advanced online learning tool.

From the moment customers receive the welcome email, they start a process that begins with market research, leads to building their site, and results in an income-generating online business.

This process presents an ordered and logical set of steps to take to build a *business*, not just a site or blog.

None of the other five builders provides a process that, when followed, offers a high likelihood of business success. The studies included in this report point to this clearly.

2) The Solo Build It! platform provides all the background, guidance and support to accomplish each step, precisely when you need them.

The support system in Solo Build It! is not just technical support. It's *business*-building support. It's powered by professionals, and by successful customers who want to give back to the Solo Build It! community.

And you do become part of a supportive community. People from around the world, from all age groups, will answer your questions and offer support and advice about specific tools, about business, and about life.

The Future of Solopreneurship

The days of creating a successful online business without a plan are long past. These days, success requires focus, determination, and a detailed plan that lays out the steps needed to achieve it.

That plan involves publishing high-value, evergreen (or cornerstone) content that visitors can easily find and want to share. Blogging may be great for pundits and news-oriented sites, but people seeking trustworthy information need more than opinions and news.

Success also requires the use of social media. But with fake news and clickbait vying for people's attention, it's essential to know how to create interesting posts and Tweets that stand out from the noise.

When it comes to earning an income online, many website owners are stooping to new lows with fake reviews. They use bait and switch tactics to convince visitors to purchase the product or service that pays the most commission, rather than promoting the product that will best serve those visitors.

Internet users are becoming more aware and more sophisticated with each scandal and each scam. Fake reviews and get-rich-quick schemes will fail in the long term, even if, like an opioid, they give a quick hit of income in the short term.

The Future of Solopreneurship (cont'd)

Long-term business success requires long-term thinking and planning, which includes progressing from easy-to-implement monetization options to more difficult, but much more worthwhile, streams of income.

SiteSell urges the owners of *all* website-building platforms to begin providing the business education that their customers so desperately need to be successful with their online businesses. There's an endless supply of opportunity, and an equally endless supply of solo entrepreneurs who would love to enhance their lives by sharing their knowledge.

Don't contribute to the noise.

Teach everyday people how to succeed.

The State of Solopreneurship
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