IT'S NOT ME,

IT'S WOO*

After developing with WooCommerce for ten years, nationally-recognized web development agency Fyresite switched to Shopify. Here's why our team switched (and why you should, too).

Since its inception in 2011, Fyresite has been a WooCommerce company. We built WooCommerce websites, designed WooCommerce themes, and even developed custom WooCommerce plugins. Back then, WooCommerce had its issues, but Shopify seemed like too much of an underdog. Over the next decade, we were forced to reevaluate this position. Each plugin revealed a new setback. Each feature revealed a new flaw. And instead of fixing these fundamental issues, WooCommerce kept narrowing into something too inefficient for our partners.

Eventually, the reality was too clear to ignore: Shopify fit the needs of our partners better than WooCommerce did. Fyresite started offering both platforms, then abandoned WooCommerce altogether. We haven't looked back since.

It took Fyresite eleven years to accept that Shopify is the better option for the current marketplace. Let's save you some time. At its core, WooCommerce doesn't provide enough support to help merchants reach their true potential. Instead of fixing this issue, the company shifts toward a freemium model that doesn't suit today's big businesses.

AFTER 11 YEARS OF WOOCOMMERCE WE'RE MOVING ON

ONLY THE BARE BONES

WooCommerce isn't an all-in-one eCommerce solution like Shopify. It's an open-source plugin that adds products, a shopping cart, and a checkout to an existing WordPress site. Everything else is handled by WordPress. Merchants need to cover hosting, maintenance, and testing themselves. Merchants need to install WordPress themes themselves. And if merchants want extra features, they need to install plugins themselves. By design, WooCommerce requires the merchant to build their store from the ground up.

WooCommerce's ground-up plugin model isn't a fluke; it's built on WordPress by design. WordPress had supported plugins since Version 1.2 in 2004, but with the release of more custom post types with WordPress 3.0 in June 2010, WordPress was trending toward the massive CMS it is today. Theme design company WooThemes saw this trend and wanted to diversify what WordPress could build. Their solution was WooCommerce: a fork of Jigoshop that allowed WordPress websites to sell products. WooCommerce was never supposed to be an all-in-one platform. It was supposed to help existing websites sell products.

This unique model made WooCommerce extremely popular, especially amongst developers like Fyresite. If a customer wanted to sell something on their website (such as reservations, merchandise, restaurant orders, etc), the developer could simply add a plugin and make the website work however they wanted. Shopify took the other approach. They built a unified platform, complete with hosting, SSL, subdomain, PCI-DSS, fraud protection, unlimited storage, and 24/7 support. If you used Shopify, you got everything you needed. If you used WooCommerce, you had to build everything else.

For over a decade, we loved WooCommerce because it was only a plugin – we could build the rest ourselves. But as time passed on, even our most diehard WooCommerce fans couldn't deny the glaring issues that came with building an entire store on a plugin.

HISTORY OF WOOCOMMERCE

MAY 27, 2003
WordPress Initially Released

MAY 22, 2004
Plugin Support introduced in Version 1.2 of WordPress

SEPTEMBER 27, 2011
WooCommerce Launched

MAY 19, 2015
Acquired by Automattic the parent company of WordPress

OCTOBER 19, 2017
2017 WooCommerce hit $10 billion in sales

TODAY
WooCommerce powers 30% of all online stores

TOO MANY PLUGINS

Our earlier WooCommerce websites were a breeze – most of our projects were marketing websites with eCommerce on the side. Needless to say, the market shifted. Businesses moved exclusively online. Developers stopped building marketing websites that also sold things. Instead, developers started building eCommerce websites that also marketed things.

WooCommerce adapted with a freemium model. The WooCommerce plugin remained open-source, but any extra features would require plugins. This model incentivized WooCommerce to sell any and all important features as separate plugins. Right now, the official WooCommerce store lists hundreds of paid plugins. Most of these plugins offer only the most basic features. To add subscriptions, merchants need to buy WooCommerce Subscriptions. To edit checkout fields, merchants need to buy Checkout Field Editor. Even the most basic features, like UPS shipping rate quotes, require a separate plugin.

When every feature requires a separate plugin, websites get really cluttered really fast. Getting all the basic features you need usually takes 20-30 plugins. It's not uncommon for a simple store to use 50+ plugins. We've seen plenty of stores with hundreds.

All those plugins can take a major toll on a website. The biggest issue is speed. If a website has too many plugins, it tends to work a lot more slowly (since the website has to handle more tasks at once). In fact, one of the most common reasons a WooCommerce website runs slowly is that it has too many plugins. But speed is only indicative of a much bigger problem: messy website structure. When your store becomes a Frankenstein's monster of plugins, other issues pop up.

AN INFESTATION OF BUGS

Plugins work great with WooCommerce, but they don't always play well together. That's because a plugin is basically a set of instructions: when a condition is met, the computer needs to follow certain steps. A few extra instructions are easy to deal with, but lots of extra instructions can overlap, contradict, and overwhelm the system. This problem is easy to fix on a small scale – just run tests, find bugs, and write a bit of code to solve the problem. But when a website has hundreds of plugins, quality assurance gets really messy. Every time a bug pops up, developers need to test every single plugin and combination of plugins. QA becomes an absolute nightmare.

Things get even worse when updates roll out. Just like apps on your phone, each plugin needs updates. A lot of these updates are really important – they patch bugs, close security gaps, and make the plugin more reliable. But when a store has 30-100+ plugins, keeping up with all those updates is next to impossible. That means important issues go unfixed. When merchants do remember to update plugins, more bugs arise. A security patch in one plugin could cause it to conflict with another, which means developers need to QA everything again.

Worst of all is when WooCommerce or WordPress gets an update. Because lots of important plugins are built by third parties, they won't always mesh well with the new update. Some plugins won't work at all. That means merchants need to manually trim their plugins every time WordPress releases a security patch or feature addon.

Sometimes, entire plugins won't work on a new version, so merchants need to stay on an older version of WordPress. This is a major security risk. It means well-known security vulnerabilities stay open and exploitable. That's why more than 70% of WordPress websites have known security vulnerabilities. And as a result, websites run slower and can't grow into new versions of WordPress as easily. By using WooCommerce and the slew of plugins it requires to function, merchants are dooming themselves to a buggy, vulnerable website.

An overly-minimalist system looks good on paper, but merchants pay the price with lots of plugins that cause countless issues. They also miss out on amazing features that come out-of-the-box with most alternatives.
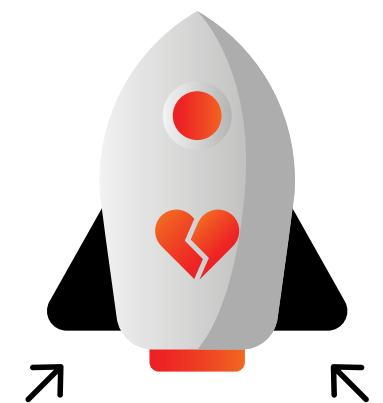
PLUGINS CAN CRIPPLE WOOCOMMERCE
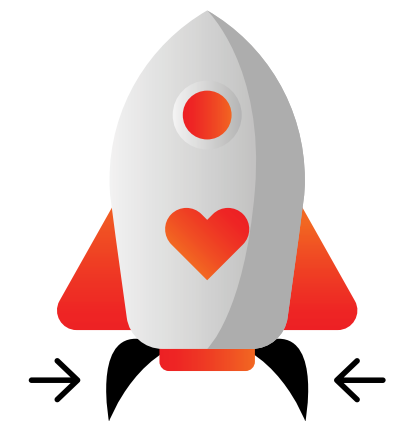
PLUGINS ENHANCE SHOPIFY

POOR CI/CD SUPPORT

WooCommerce wants to be minimalist, but that philosophy forces them to cut some really important features coders need to succeed.

Consider multi-developer environment support: most teams of coders want to work on the same project at the same time (sort of like how people can collaborate on the same Google Doc). Not only is this feature super helpful, but it's vital for continuous integration/continuous delivery (CI/CD). CI/CD is a very specific strategy used by the biggest companies in the world (including Amazon, Facebook, etc): instead of releasing big updates that break systems, developers release lots of small, automated updates constantly. It allows us to fix bugs while they're small and deliver a better product to customers.

CI/CD is vital for bigger companies. But because WooCommerce is a WordPress plugin, multi-developer environments are really hard to set up. As a result, the CI/CD that companies need to grow is hard to implement.

Of course, CI/CD isn't impossible, but it's unnecessarily messy. Developers either need extra plugins or a GitHub repo (or both) to deploy code to the staging environment. This means that developers have to work twice as hard to deliver the same results. In the process, the website has to rely on even more plugins, which makes it even less efficient.

Developers shouldn't have to force the tools they need into a platform. Those tools should be there from the start. But it's not just developer tools that are lacking. Because of WooCommerce's fundamental plugin model, merchants miss out on vital maintenance. In the long run, they end up paying more for less.

THE REAL COST OF WOOCOMMERCE

WooCommerce is often seen as the "cheap and customizable" option, but the truth is far more sinister. WooCommerce doesn't include vital features such as hosting, maintenance, bug fixes, SSL certificates, subdomains, PCI-DSS compliance, fraud protection, or storage. Those features aren't just nice to have; they're necessary for an eCommerce store to function properly. Merchants may not have to pay for them upfront, but they do have to buy them eventually to have a fully functioning store.

Hosting is a tough feature to price. The price can vary depending on how much storage and visits per month are allotted. Shared hosting is cheap – GoDaddy costs $9.99/month, while premium hosting solutions like Liquid Web's enterprise-class config, start at $2,788/mo, or upwards of $33,000 per year (plus $400 in startup fees). Merchants may be tempted to save money by opting for the cheaper option, but beware- traffic spikes may not be supported. Even big retailers face this issue – in 2016, Macy's got too much Black Friday traffic and crashed, costing them a fortune. Anything short of premium could be disastrous.

SSL (which secures a website's traffic and adds that nice https://) varies based on security needs. Ecommerce websites need to pay for premium security, since they handle transactions and personal information. And you guessed it, this isn't included with WooCommerce. SSL prices can vary from $9.99/year to $599/year.

EXCLUDES:
• SSL CERTIFICATE
• PCI-DSS COMPLIANCE

INCLUDES:
• SSL CERTIFICATE
• PCI-DSS COMPLIANCE

Next comes **PCI-DSS** (payment card industry data security standard), which dictates how a website has to handle payment information. On its own, WooCommerce cannot handle PCI-DSS

compliance. Assessing compliance can cost under $300 or upwards of $70,000, depending on the website and technical specifications.

Anti-fraud is especially important, but especially hard to price. Without it, false chargebacks could cost merchants a fortune. A study by Foley & Lardner LLP found that private companies spend $50,000 on internal fraud prevention, while public companies spend $3 million. There's no upper limit for bigger companies, but most WooCommerce stores will likely spend $99/year on fraud prevention.

The final cost of running an eCommerce website depends on a lot of factors. Businesses could easily cheap out on hosting, but then the website would be slow and vulnerable. In our ten years of experience building WooCommerce websites for major companies, hosting and maintenance regularly exceed $5,000 per month. Stores that spend less on hosting and maintenance end up using more developer hours each month. The "cheap and customizable" option ends up costing more than twice as much as the all-in-one solution.
It makes sense, too – Shopify uses the power of scale to save customers money. Each separate host and management service needs to make a profit, which adds up very quickly. The all-in-one service can provide better hosting for cheaper.

WOOCOMMERCE MAINTENANCE IS RISKY

THE PLATFORM-AS-A-SERVICE ALTERNATIVE

Let's think about the costs – $5,000/month with 2.9% + 30¢ fees per transaction is a lot of money, and the merchant ends up getting lots of different services from lots of different parties. How much would it cost to get all those services in one package?

Shopify Plus is an all-in-one platform-as-a-service that includes all those features and more. It starts at $2,000/month with reduced transaction fees when combined with Shopify Payments. Merchants that use a third-party payment processor do pay a 0.15% fee per transaction, but most merchants just use Shopify Payments to keep fees at a minimum. It makes sense that Shopify Plus is cheaper overall for big businesses – Shopify benefits from economies of scale. PCI-DSS compliance, for instance, varies wildly. According to a securitymetrics estimate, PCI DSS assessment costs can range from $100 for a small business to $500,000 for an enterprise. However, Shopify can certify the platform itself such that individual merchants don't have to. This isn't just true for compliance; Shopify saves customers money on hosting, too. They use a mix of AWS and Google cloud hosting services to run websites, which provides a lot more flexibility and lumps all the expenses together. All those savings add up. For one monthly cost, you get all the services you need to support the website, and each one is better than you'd be able to buy as an individual.

Shopify has risen above WooCommerce after spending the past decade tirelessly refining the all-in-one model. The original Shopify platform was built by eCommerce merchants Tobias Lütke and Scott Lake, who just wanted a better platform for their snowboarding store. Their goal wasn't to simply add a shopping cart to WordPress; their goal was to package all those hosting and maintenance costs into a cheaper and easier platform for other merchants.

The software is further specialized for Shopify Plus customers. Unlike WooCommerce, which requires developers to add all the features, Shopify Plus boosts growth via exclusive APIs with up to 5x throughput, dedicated multipass/SSO APIs, awesome automation with Shopify Flow and Scripts, and more complex tech features that support big stores from the start. Teams have it easier, too. Shopify Plus includes unlimited staff accounts, international support, and a specialized admin with unified analytics. The results speak for themselves: stores that use Shopify Plus with Shopify Checkout and Shopify Pay get 18% higher conversion rates across the board. Why add plugins for the bare minimum when other platforms offer awesome features out of the box? Shopify knows that plugins should supplement the core platform, not build it.

	WOO	Shopify
HOSTING	$9.99/MTH - $4,500/YR	$2,000/MTH* *UP TO 800K A YEAR IN REVENUE
SSL	$9.99/YR - $599/YR	INCLUDED
PCI-DSS	$300/YR - $70,000/YR	INCLUDED
ANTI-FRAUD	$79.99/YR - $90/YR	INCLUDED
MAINTENANCE & HOSTING	$0/MTH - $5,000/MTH	INCLUDED

01 — SPEED
02 — EASE
03 — GROWTH
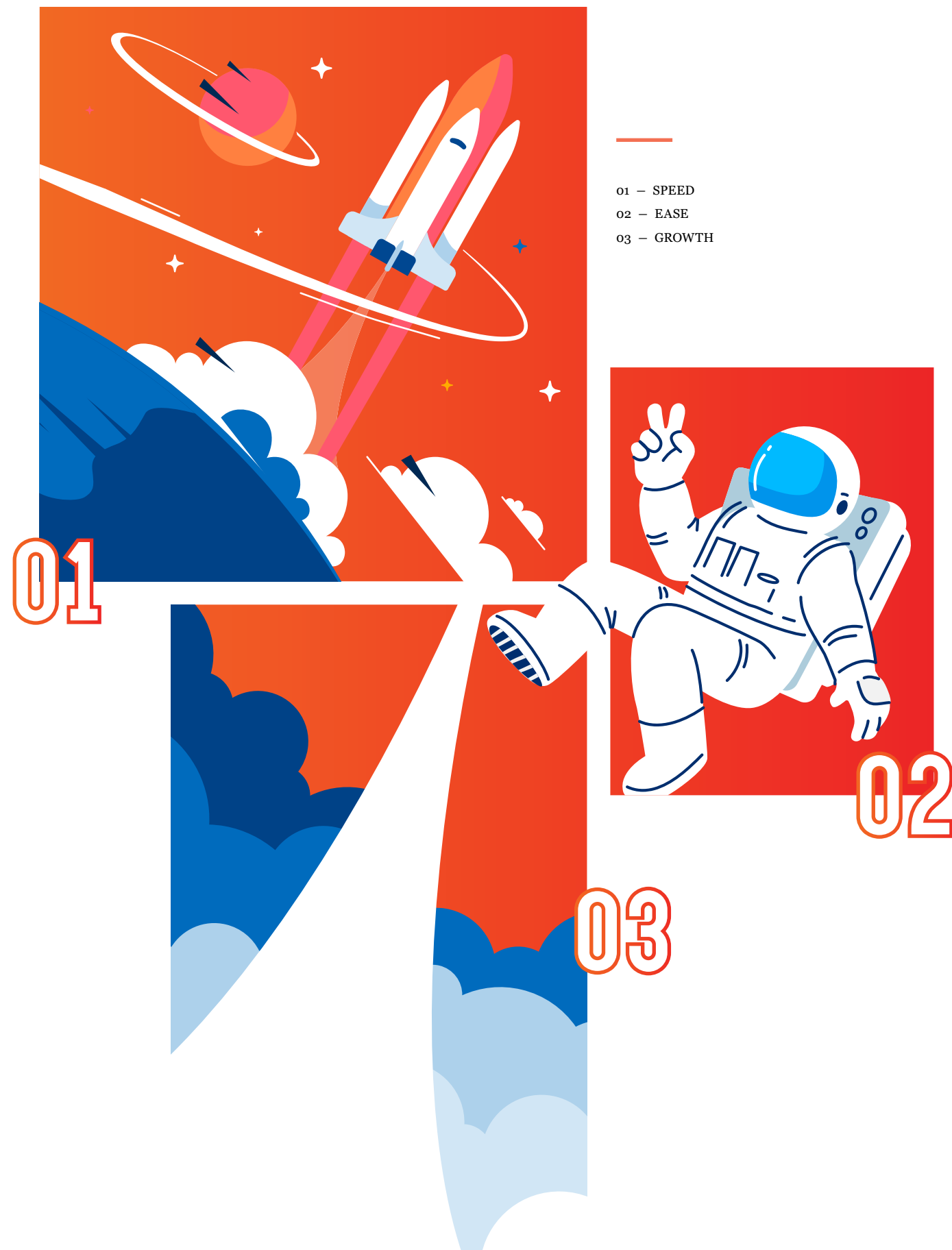
WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE SWITCH

Switching to something unfamiliar is often scary, but once you know what to expect, that fear goes away. Expect a few of the following benefits when you switch from WooCommerce to Shopify Plus.

First, expect an overall faster website. Shopify's features are all part of the same system, so each piece doesn't need to repeat steps. The Shopify platform is written in Liquid/Ruby on Rails. Having a dedicated language helps each piece communicate quickly and efficiently without lots of translations in between. The result is a system with parts designed to fit together. It runs more smoothly and gives your customers the experience they deserve.

Because all the features a merchant needs are beneath the hood, maintenance costs should be a lot lower. Hosting, maintenance, QA, security, and bug fixes are all included as part of the package. Did your website receive a huge spike of traffic? There's no need to worry – Shopify Plus has enough bandwidth for 6,000 checkouts per minute and minimal fees for each purchase . You can focus on the growth you deserve.

Automation is also far easier on Shopify Plus. Instead of figuring out how to set up a GitHub repo or installing another plugin, you can simply add Shopify Flow and Shopify Scripts. With Flow, automation is as easy as making a flowchart – just drag, drop, and enter. Automate your migration or integrate a robust CI/CD pipeline. If you can imagine it, you can automate it.

Finally, expect growth like you've never seen before. Shopify stores with custom checkouts and Shopify Pay have 18% higher conversion rates. Handle 5x additional throughput with dedicated APIs, no purchase fees, international support, and more. Your store can grow into international markets faster and more sustainably.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SWITCH

Switching to Shopify Plus is worth the time and effort. We know it's scary to end a relationship, but at Fyresite we truly believe that it's time to move on from WooCommerce. Our clients who have migrated are happier, running their businesses with more efficiency, and saving money in the long run.

Just like with any break-up, you're going to need a support system. At Fyresite, we are a Shopify Plus Partner and are ready to guide you through the process, handling all of your design and development needs along the way. Contact our team of in-house experts today to start a new, long-lasting relationship with Shopify Plus.
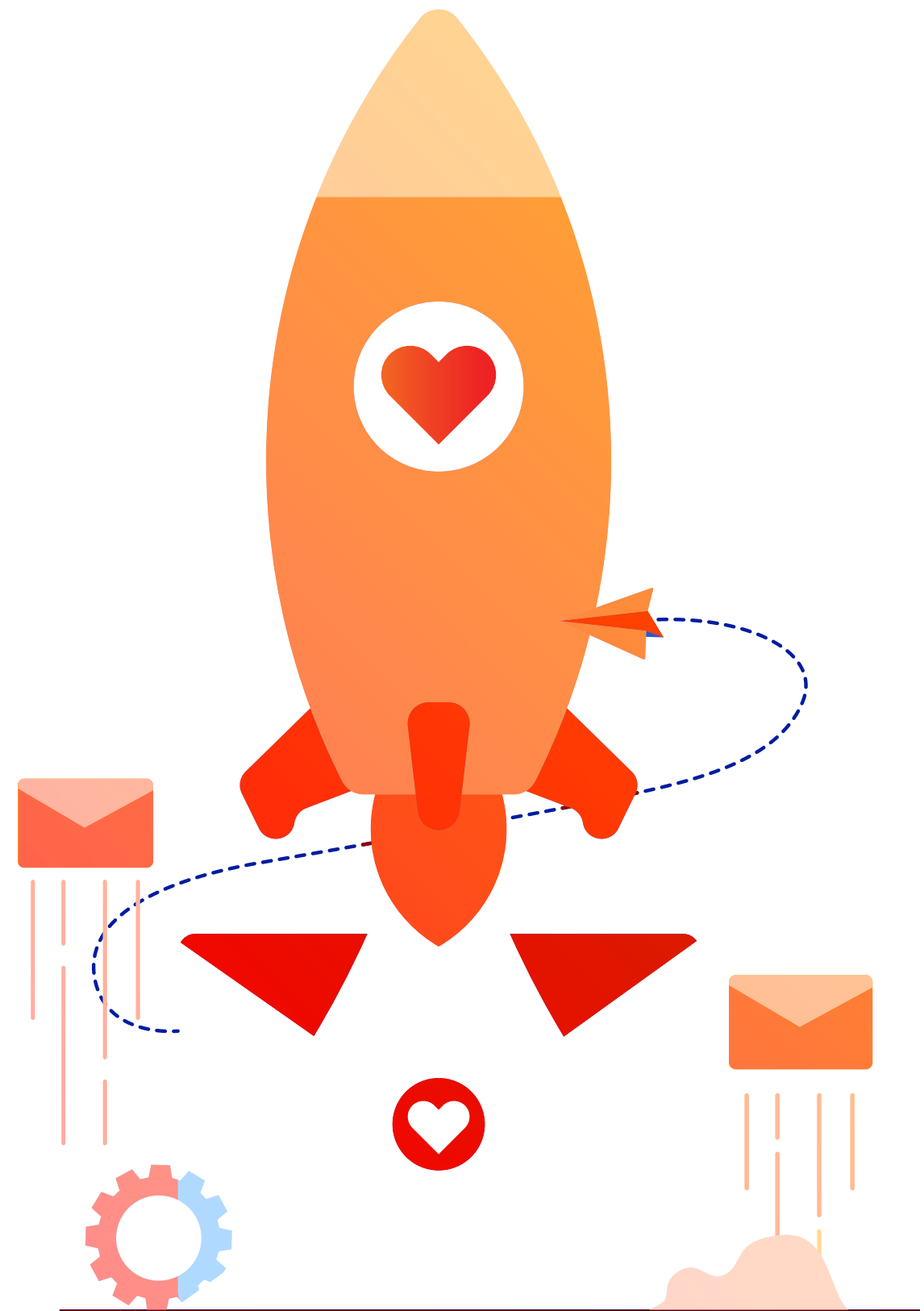
CONTACT FYRESITE TO LAUNCH TODAY

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

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[Shopify Vs Shopify Plus: What's The Difference?](#)

[Which Shopify Pricing Plan Is Right For Me?](#)

[How To Optimize Shopify Plus For International Markets](#)

[When To Upgrade To A Custom Shopify Theme](#)

[Why (And When) Shopify Plus Is Worth $2000+/Month](#)

[Top 10 Shopify Plus Apps For Major Enterprises](#)

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