

Introduction Website Hosting

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Web hosting is a service that allows users to post Web pages to the Internet. A Web host, or hosting service provider (HSP), is a business that provides the technologies and services needed for Web sites to be viewed on the Web. Web hosting is a primary service that consumers can utilize after obtaining either dial-up or broadband access to the Internet. It allows users to disseminate their own information resources to any Internet user that is interested in accessing them. Web hosting utilizes the server/client model to distribute content. A Web hosting provider will offer its clients access to a Web server that will push that client's content to recipients on request. Recipients use clients, or Web browsers, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator to request content from the Web over their own Internet connection. Web sites are hosted, or stored, on a special computer called a server. The server, or host computer, allows Internet users connected anywhere to reach your site when they put in your domain address, for example: www.yourcompany.com. The host computers are set up so that when someone types in your domain name (your Web address), the address will follow a route from computer to computer until it reaches your host computer and your web site. Then the Internet user will be able to browse through your Web site. Hosting companies usually require that you own your own domain name in order to host with them. If you don't have a domain name, most hosting companies will help you purchase one. To have a Web site on the Internet you first need to have a Web server. Unfortunately, owning and operating a Web server can be very costly and requires technical expertise that most businesses do not possess. This is where "Web hosts" come in. Web hosts provide the equipment and other technical resources that are required to provide a consumer with their own customized Web site. Hosting companies charge a rental fee for the service of storing your Web site and allowing Web site visitor traffic flow to through their computers to get to the information on your site. Web hosting services are more advantageous because they are outsourced, meaning that the physical location of the Web server does not reside at the consumer's premises. Outsourcing your Web presence effectively transfers the responsibility for maintaining your Web site infrastructure from yourself to an organization that is more competent to do so. Many individuals and small businesses take advantage of Web hosts in order to free themselves from pre-occupying their scarce human and financial resources on Web host issues. Individuals and companies who outsource their Web presence do so in order to achieve the following objectives: reduce and control operating costs; improve their own company focus; gain access to in-depth expertise; free internal resources for core competencies; and obtain access to world-class capabilities to control IT functions which are difficult to manage. The best Web hosting services will provide relatively seamless access to IT functions that will allow you to self-publish your Web site. It is important to note that "Web hosting" strictly refers to providing the consumer with the capacity to upload content to a server for immediate transmission for those that request it. Web hosting does not include the authoring of a Web site or the development of database-driven components or code. It is incumbent upon the consumer of Web hosting services to develop this material or have it developed on his or her behalf. Web hosting is offered to the consumer in multiple formats based upon the user's requirements. These requirements are incumbent upon cost and infrastructure provided. Web hosting can be obtained free of cost from content portal sites such as Yahoo! GeoCities. Such content sites invite individual users to establish Web sites on their domain in order to create a critical mass of core content on their online property. The user does not pay for service because it is subsidized by banner advertising. Because such sites do not charge, they offer limited service depth and quality of service. For example, free services will not provide customized hosting services where domain names are personalized (i.e., www.yourdomain.com). The "paid" class of Web hosting services however does provide such services. Paid services are normally offered by Internet service providers (ISPs) or by hosting service providers (HSPs). Paid services provide a reliable set of offerings that ensure domain name personalization, service depth and high levels of quality of service. The paid class of Web hosting includes shared, dedicated and managed services. Shared is the most basic level of hosting. With shared hosting, numerous Web sites are shared on one server. While an economic solution, they typically cannot handle large amounts of storage or traffic. If a consumer's needs are more sophisticated, then they might opt for either dedicated or managed services. Dedicated hosting allots a Web site its own server. This is more flexible than shared hosting, as webmasters typically have full control over the back end of the server, including choice of OS. Managed hosting, on the other hand is a dedicated server that is accompanied by a full suite of technical support, maintenance and monitoring services. This differs from dedicated Web hosting, where customers are provided with their own servers but are still responsible for virtually all administrative and maintenance duties.