

Web Hosting Services

How important is your web host to your business?

A White Paper



Telmar Internet Services LLC.

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Glad you asked! And the reason I'm glad you asked is because over the last few months I've talked to several customers who were having problems with their web hosts. I'm talking about major business and money losing problems!

Problems like the web hosting companies going out of business and leaving my clients in the lurch. Problems like their sites being inaccessible 20% of the time because the web host kept selling out the space. Problems like having their web sites hacked because there were NO security precautions in place.

And these are only some of the problems my clients have come up against. The bottom line is ...

You cannot afford to do business with a bad web hosting company!!

It will cost you clients. It will cost you revenue. It will cost you your credibility. And finally, it will give you massive migraine headaches!

For those of you not yet familiar with the jargon, your web host is the company that "hosts" or sells you the space for your web site. This company can be the same company that provides you with your Internet access and email (i.e. your Internet provider).

However -- and this "however" is critical to the discussion that follows --

You do not have to get web hosting from the same company you get your Internet access from!

Your web hosting company can be located anywhere in the world. As long as you have Internet access, you will have access to your web site!

If you have a web based business, like it or not, your web host is your business partner. The choice you make as to who your business partner will be is critical to your success because if they stumble along, giving you less than optimal performance (sometimes far less than optimal!), guess what? It cripples your business.

When you have an Internet business, **your most important partner is your web site host.** Trust us, we have learned the hard way - our past hosts have cost us over \$30,000 in less than a few months because of hardware or software problems they were having. Yet in spite of the importance of this partnership, I see small businesses hop from host to host looking for the "cheapest" deal.

Well ... if you've ever been the victim of a poorly performing web host, then you know that "cheapest" is not necessarily good! So you save yourself \$10 a month in hosting fees. Weigh this against the loss of hundreds of customers and thousands of dollars in revenue because your site is down. **By trying to save the \$10 a month, you could be nickel-and-diming your company to an early grave.** Think about it. $\$10 \times 12 = \120 in savings for web

hosting fees vs. thousands of additional dollars in immediate revenue that you would never see if your web site was down ... not to mention the even greater loss in backend sales. Am I missing something here? Where's the saving?

And I haven't even started talking about the "free hosting" sites yet! Actually I'm not going to say much about free hosted sites right now except ...

FORGET IT! Sure, they may have a place in your marketing campaign but you need your own domain name (preferably with a dot.com suffix). If you do not have your own domain yet... [go here](#) to find out more.

Assuming you've got a business domain (or are about to take the plunge and get one) you need a reliable web host.

The trick is finding one! And the trick to finding a good web site host is in knowing what to look for.

So, **what should you look for?**

Service, service, service. Service is SO critical to your business. Say you have been working away on a fantastic sales letter and you are now ready to post it to your web site so you can test it the next day. You run into a snag and need help from your web site host. The problem is, it's 10PM and they are not open until 9AM the next morning! So you cool your heels until 9AM and then ... busy signal! Talk about feeling frustrated! You've now had to put off your urgent project, not once - but twice! It's enough to make a person grow hair on the bottom of their feet!

Security. Do you have any idea how much damage a hacker can do to your site? Imagine the impact on your business if a hacker could worm their way into your system and shut you down... or if the wrong people broke into your client files and stole confidential credit card numbers! This is the stuff nightmares are made of!

The problem is that many of the smaller web hosting companies (and even some of the larger ones) don't pay attention to security. They don't have the resources or the personnel ... but then again, neither do you! You want to spend your time marketing your products or services and providing great service to your customers ... not becoming a security expert. You need to look for a web hosting company that has all the big security issues worked out so that people can't hack into your web site and do terrible things to your information. Your web host should be on top of the latest techniques that hackers are using and they should have protection in place to combat security problems and issues.

Fast connection times. I talk about how important it is to have quick loading web pages. But even the quickest loading pages are affected by the level of "connectivity" that your web site host has to the Internet. If your visitors have to wait 30 seconds for a page to load, you have a problem ... no customer! Why? Because on the Internet, 30 seconds feels like 30 minutes, and we live in a **very impatient world!**

Continuity of Service. In North America, there are a few major Internet backbones (fiber optic networks). Your web host should be connected to both East and West Coast backbones. Millions of web sites are connected to each backbone, but if your web host is not connected to both the east and west coast backbones, you could lose business.

For example, if a fiber optic cable gets cut on the West Coast, all web sites and all web hosts on the entire West Coast of the continent go down. Imagine the chaos if millions of web sites could not be reached! On the other hand, even if the West Coast backbone went down, the East Coast (on a different backbone) would still be fully operational. In order to make sure you have continuity of service, your web host should be connected to both backbones. If one went down, the other would still be operational, and people from the East Coast (and around the world for that matter) could reach your West Coast web site (and vice versa).

Unfortunately, most web hosts still aren't connected to both backbones ... in spite of the fact that a catastrophe like this happens at least twice a year! If your web site is down, you are losing sales! Can you really afford to have this happen?

Look for a minimum of a T1 connection going to both East Coast and West Coast backbones. If you can get a web host with a T3 (or better) connection going to multiple coasts, that's even better!

To complicate things even more, you need to make sure they are truly going to each of the backbones because it can get very confusing trying to decipher who is connected to what. We've been involved with a couple of hosts in the past who have said they had a separate connection to both the East and West Coasts. What they didn't know was that their East Coast host was actually up-streamed to a West Coast host. So when the West Coast went down, their entire network went down... because their East Coast connection was routed through a West Coast provider. Talk about confusing!

The bottom line is that it's important for your web site host to have separate connections to the main backbones in both the East Coast and the West Coast. It's REALLY important to have this capability.

Extra Services. Some web hosting companies appear to be a good deal on the surface. That is, until you sign up with them and start finding out they charge for every little extra service. Things like your own POP mailbox, email aliases, an auto responder, CGI scripts and bins, and your own site statistics. This is when a deal is definitely NOT a deal. Any web host you look at should, at the very least, give you a few CGI scripts, site stats and your own mailbox!

Now that we've examined some of the things you should be looking for in a web host, let's look at some of the options you have available to you:

Free web hosting services:

I've already told you that you should not go with a free service. Now I'll tell you why. Here are the **reasons why you should NOT use a free web hosting service:**

- Visitors perceive free sites as small time and unprofessional.
- If you do manage to establish a business using a free web site address, your name becomes linked with THEIR name.
- They can shut you down instantly. If you get accused of spamming, they'll cut you off - you don't even get the chance to defend yourself!
- They may decide you are doing **too well** and start charging you.
- They could go out of business, leaving you with nothing!
- You spend all your time and money advertising a URL connected to someone else. You are totally relying on their good graces and business sense. If anything at all happens to your URL, you've lost all of your hard earned incoming links, your advertising does you no good, and your customers don't have the slightest idea where to find you!
- They advertise on YOUR site. Or more to the point in THEIR space. If you are getting it for free ... it's THEIR space. So you put up with advertising that you can't control, either in content or location. Some of the free web sites take up the first whole screen with the "owner's" banner ads and sales info.
- Your visitors could get a constant stream of pop-up screens advertising the free host's "stuff." Having to constantly shut down pop-up screens is very annoying to most visitors.
- One of my clients said that every time a visitor came to her index page, they would be barraged with dozens of opening windows. If you shut one down another one opened! Great way to look professional with your visitors!
- If you don't read the small (tiny) print, **you may be giving up the copyright to all your web content** ... in exchange for your "free" web space. If that doesn't scare you, what does?
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If you plan on going big on the Internet, never ever go with free web site hosting!

Free web site hosting is great for people who want to put up a personal web page or a web page of little importance... but don't trust them for your business web site! You can create a business with a limited budget. You can't do it for free!

Cheap Web Site Hosting:

Now just above the "free" hosting category, there's another level of web site hosting. You can get really cheap web site hosting, some as low as \$9 a month.

Here are the kinds of problems you may run into:

- **Poor support.** The budget web hosting companies deal in quantity. As a result, they don't have time to give you a lot of support. So if you ever run into a problem, they may not return

your phone call or reply to your email for days because they have a very inadequate support schedule... one of the reasons they can offer a very low price! This can **cost you a fortune** if your ordering system is down and you are unable to get support.

- **Slow Connection Times.** You could experience slowdowns because these companies tend to oversell their services. They put up too many sites on their service, and rely on the fact that many of their customers do not know any better. This way, they can lower their overhead and keep their prices low.

I've tried budget web hosting in the past and it has created a lot of problems for me. Based on my own bad experiences, I do not recommend budget hosting. I simply recommend going with a web host who is credible and who meets all the requirements stated above.

How does your web hosting solution measure up?

At Telmar Our Small Business Hosting services have been designed to provide enterprise-caliber best practices, support, infrastructure, and services, while offering the flexibility to scale so our customers can focus on their business. Whether your applications reside on Microsoft, Linux, UNIX or are heterogeneous in nature, Telmar's foundation of services and support combine together to create a customized hosting platform that scales up and down as you need it.

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