

# Selecting the Right Hosting Provider

*Insider secrets that every IT and business executive should know*

## **HOW DO SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES IDENTIFY SUBSTANDARD HOSTING COMPANIES?**

*Stay away from the hosting provider selling space and bandwidth as a core offering.*

If a provider can't supply value-added services that protect and drive revenue for your business, then the provider is nothing but an interchangeable commodity.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH CHOOSING THE LEAST EXPENSIVE HOSTING PLAN?**

*There is a reason the cheapest Web hosting plan is the cheapest.*

Why invite disaster? The bottom line is that hosters that differentiate service by price most often do not have the resources to fully support a growing business. Some pitfalls of going with a low-cost provider include availability issues, security breaches, shortage of support on weekends and evenings, and concerns about the financial viability of the service provider. Stop viewing hosting as a commodity and be selective – the Web is critical to the economics of your business.

## **HOW CAN SMALL AND MIDSIZED COMPANIES IDENTIFY A HIGH-QUALITY HOSTING PROVIDER THAT IS RIGHT FOR THEIR BUSINESS?**

*The right hosting provider is a partner, not a vendor.* Hosting is about providing more than just a Website. Today's quality hosting company provides value-added services to build, create, secure, protect, and manage your online identity. As the Web becomes the primary access point for your customers, your Web presence is paramount. Look to your hosting partner as both a technology

provider and an online business advisor prepared to assist in addressing design, functionality, and marketing projects. If your hosting provider can't help you in meeting new challenges head-on, it's time to question your partnership.

## **WHAT SOLUTIONS SHOULD A BUSINESS EXPECT FROM A HOSTING PROVIDER?**

*The right hosting provider will work with you to meet your business objectives.*

A good hosting provider will ask questions and learn about your long-term goals in order to establish the appropriate plan or service to meet those goals. Expect dedicated and individualized attention from a hoster's staff as they build a relationship with you. Also, know that the right hoster sells not just technology but solutions designed to create optimal business benefits.

## **WHAT ARE THE INDICATORS THAT A HOSTING PROVIDER IS THINKING ABOUT TOMORROW?**

*Solutions that protect and drive revenue are all that matter.*

Different customers have different needs, but you should be looking for a firm that delivers a turnkey business solution. The building blocks of today's business include personalized email, a Website, and, for some, an online store. You can expect that tomorrow's marketplace will demand more collaboration instruments, online marketing capabilities, and scalable on-demand storage to ensure your technology drives growth and scales appropriately. The hoster that is nimble and ahead of the curve won't just latch onto the next big thing; instead the focus will be on providing quality services that are of true business value.

### WHAT ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT BUSINESSES SHOULD ASK THE HOSTING PROVIDER BEFORE BUYING?

*Cut to the chase and learn about its staff and past successes.*

Questions that give insight into a hoster's ability to enhance and manage a Website must be addressed before contract execution. Some examples of important questions are:

- How many CISSP, Cisco, and Microsoft Certified Professionals are on staff?
- Does the hosting provider maintain a 24x7 Network Operations Center?
- Does the company have online marketing resources or partners?
- What business applications does the hosting provider provide and/or support?

Finally, ask for case studies and testimonials from existing customers. Request to speak with multiple clients in your industry who have signed up for services in the past several months.

### WHAT SHOULD THE CUSTOMER EXPECT FROM A HOSTING PROVIDER AFTER BUYING?

*Expect services to be turned up quickly.*

The hoster should start working with you within 24 hours of signing a contract. If you've chosen a good and experienced hoster, you should feel confident that you've purchased a reliable service on a stable and proven technology. If a problem does occur, monitor your hoster closely. The company's response to issues early in the relationship will be an indicator of things to come.



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