

Unbiased Step-by-step Guide on Web-Hosting

By Pavel Lenshin

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No more speeches about importance of your own domain, no more talks about necessity of having paid hosting. If you think your brand domain name and stable hosting with a number of features and absence of ads are not worth, at least, \$50-\$150 per year, then you probably want to play games, rather than build online business.

Choosing hosting provider is something similar to choosing the place of your off-line office. Despite the fact that it is as easy to enter the URL and go to web-site that is physically located in Sidney as in Oslo, the final role here plays the speed of connection and stability of the hosting itself.

The problem with hosting comes down to the old statute of running ebusiness - that is RESEARCH before ACT! The easiest thing to do online is to pay money, the hardest is to THINK OVER what I'm paying for! That statement is true with hosting also because you can pay, let's say, \$35 monthly for some particular hosting service, without notice that in two mouse clicks there is an hosting offer providing two times better services all for \$15 per month only, so you will keep on losing services as well as \$20 monthly that accumulates up to \$240 annually losses as a Fee for not doing hosting research! Besides you should keep your eyes open for very good discounted offers that could save you 30-50% for the first year of payments.

Phase I - Determining NEEDS

1. Estimate your ebusiness basic requirements: total web-space needed, monthly bandwidth (approximate traffic

volume multiplied by the most visited web-pages' total size) and ability to run CGI scripts as a must for every ebusiness.

If it is content rich web-site and example of your first year of hosting may look like this:

- 30-50Mb of disc space;
- 500Mb-1Gb of monthly bandwidth;
- cgi-bin to be able to run your own scripts and offer additional services;

If it is sales web-site, your first year of hosting should be something similar to these requirements:

- 50-300Mb of disc space depending on how much info products you are going to sell and therefore upload on your server;
- 1-3Gb of monthly bandwidth;
- cgi-bin to be able to run your own scripts and offer additional services;

In particular case with one-two ebooks and three-four pages sales web-site, 10Mb of storage space with 500Mb of monthly bandwidth, in general, is more than enough, if you are not going to expand it, so look closely and examine your potential but remember: you ALWAYS have a chance to expand, but you will NOT be able to get your money back if you overpay for services or web-space you don't need. That is called efficient ebusiness running.

2. Determine additional services that are necessary or preferably to have. Consider among them the following:

- Email aliases
 - URL Redirects
 - Web Mail
 - FTP access/ FTP Accounts
 - Web control panel
 - Graphic statistics
 - Custom error pages
 - POP3 Accounts
 - Sub-domains
 - Autoresponders
 - Mailing List(s)
 - Password protected directories
 - MYSQL database(s)
 - Perl
 - PHP
 - SSI
- and
- marketing info & support
 - promotional help (SE submissions, free banner impressions)
 - shopping cart
 - chat
 - forum

3. Plan your hosting expenses beforehand. Usually the amount you pay depends on the amount of services you choose, but not always as there are hosting providers, which offer identical services for totally different money. The saying that "You get what you paid for" is not necessarily true, especially what concerns high profit margins internet business. Although hosting service is not pure online as it involves some physical computer systems to be installed, nevertheless paying more for less is extremely possible. In other words, know your budget.

Phase II. Selecting the ONLY ONE!

1. Those who start looking for proper place or business web-site should have one or several possible hostings in view that you knew or met positive feedback about. For now just make a note of them and put aside, we will come back for them in the step 3.

2. Now it is time to search among hundreds of offers. Accomplish your search by filling online forms at:

<http://www.google.com>

<http://www.hostcompare.com>

<http://www.findmyhosting.com>

<http://www.findwebspace.com>

http://www.hostsearch.com/search_main.asp

Click on advanced/enhanced search option if available, input all your approximate criteria that we determined at the first phase and here we go! Tens if not hundreds of wannabe your host providers at your computer screen in less than a minute.

3. Narrow your search by selecting first en (or more if you have the will and spare time) on every search site page(s) result.

Now you should have 50 (or more) host providers as a result of host searching and 2-5 hosting companies you heard and knew about before.

In the next step we will start to compare all of them in order to choose the one that deserves your hard-earned money. This task is being accomplished by simple viewing and testing each of the host providers' web-site. How to test and what things to pay close attention to are explained below, but first eliminate all double hosts if there are any.

4. Knowing your potential market will help you to differentiate some of the host providers by selecting those who are physically located closer to your market. If your

auditory is mainly English speaking people then you should think about choosing servers that are located in US. If you are a German restaurant owner running web-site for local market it is not critical, but preferable to put your web-site to web servers that are located in Germany, not in US. I have mentioned web servers instead of hosting providers on purpose, because the hosting provider itself may be located and registered in one place, but having their servers co-located in other city or country, like my own provider situated in Moscow, but the web-site they host, physically co-located at their US servers.

If you provide universal services (like web-design) and shoot for the global markets offering Multilanguage site, then physical location of host provider is subsidiary.

5. Then we will remove absolute "losers". The first criterion they won't pass is the look of their web-site. Is it professional or there are amateurish colors with 3 or more banners? If you think the price of their site design is not even worth \$100 you may close their site and forget about them. By doing so, you distinguish profitable host providers from those that don't even have \$300-1000 to invest in the professional look of their web-site.

You may not even read what they wrote on their sites as their appearances tell ten times more about their businesses than no words can.

6. Check technical specifications of the hosting servers that are being offered for your shared hosting. Needless to say that Pentium III 450 Mhz with 1 Gb of RAM, for instance, is worse than Pentium IV 2.2 Ghz with 4 Gb of RAM. Outer channels bandwidth and speed can also give you the image of how established the host provider is.

You may not need to know all specifications of routers, connectors or other devices, just ask for specific numbers that are easy to compare. That analysis will also tell what hosts are worth further testing and what aren't.

7. We also need to reassure that our web-site as well as all possible databases won't be vanished due to power supply overload, virus, fire etc. It is important to check what kind of maintenance conditions they offer.

- Do they provide 99,9% uptime guarantee?
- What kind of independent power supply they offer?
- Is there automatic back up option?
- Do they have fire and humidity control systems?

Some host providers wouldn't even bother to tell you about these control systems. You know what to do with them - they go off the list!

8. Next stage is to send them a prewritten email asking for some question. It may be some purposeful inquiry or

imaginary one just for testing task. Those who failed to response in 24 hours are off the list also. Remember, that email, due to the "unstable nature" of the internet, may not be even delivered, so write for the second time, if no response again, than they aren't worth the ink to spend on them by crossing their web-site address out of the list :0) Just carefully tear them out :0)

9. The last test that we run is to check the connection speed of the remaining hosts. You should know how fast the response of your web-site will be.

Two online services would help us in fulfilling this task, namely:

http://www.netmechanic.com/server_check/site_monitoring.htm

this one will check a particular server within 8 hours and email you the report.

<http://www.webhostdir.com/toolkit/comparehosts.asp> allows to compare 4 hosts simultaneously by entering 4 domain names of respective web-sites.

I would suggest testing each host twice. First time to check the response rate of their corporate web-sites, and second time by comparing speed of their clients' web-site as there may be a big difference. Just make sure clients are using approximately the same shared hosting plans.

That is all. By now you should have several options, your gold, silver and bronze hosting winners. You can go ahead in setting up your web-site with anyone you prefer more. Don't lose the rest though, as they may prove to be useful in case some collision occurs with your present "winner".

Last thing. When your web-site is online, don't just forget to create additional page for providing your new service - expert analysis of selecting web-hosting. :0)

Pavel Lenshin is a publisher and webdesigner, who offers
+ Powerful package on how to run Private Info Business
+ Free subscription to the unique NET Business Magazine
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