

# Your Web Presence

By Bob Osgoodby

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If you use a free service to host your web pages you could be burned. If their advertising dollars dry up, they may simply fold their tents and disappear into the night. Forget the free web space providers - do you think you're putting forth a professional image with their ads cluttering up your web pages? I don't think so.

Most ISP's provide free web storage space. This is fine unless their service deteriorates, as many do if they grow too fast, and your response time becomes dismal. If your ISP takes umbrage with you, and cancels your account, you could lose all of your web pages. These providers also provide minimal capabilities, and you will not have much more than the basics when it comes to "bells and whistles".

Your absolute best bet is to contract for services with a provider who provides quality service at a reasonable price. If you own your own domain, the web site and pages are your property, and normally, if you become dissatisfied with the provider, it is relatively easy to switch to another. But, if the host goes out of business, and the pages are not retrievable, you have a problem. You should always retain a copy of all your web pages and images used on your local computer. This serves a dual purpose. It not only provides a high degree of safety in the event of a problem with the web server, but also assures that you will have a copy of your web pages if your web provider goes out of business.

You basically have two options when setting up your own web site. You can do it yourself or you can contract with someone to maintain it for you. For the completely uninitiated, this might be your best bet. Many of these companies provide free web page design, and will hold your hand throughout the entire process. And, if conditions change and you need to revise the site, they are just a phone call away. If you are a take charge kind of person, you may want to do it yourself.

First you have to find a domain name that is not already taken. A good place to look is <http://www.betterwhois.com/>. Once you find a domain that is available, You can register it at a number of places - <http://000domains.com> charges \$13.50 a year. You can register it for two years for only \$25 at - <http://bitshack.com> - which is one of the most inexpensive registrations that I have found.

Next you have to find a provider who will make web space available. Here, you must find a provider

who will let you start out at a minimum level, and if your needs increase, you can upgrade to the next level. I found a site that only charges \$7 a month, however there is a \$30 setup fee. You can check this out at <http://esosoft.com> but here is some better news.

Go back to <http://www.bitshack.com> and you will find sites starting at \$35 a year with no setup fee, and you get 50 MB of storage which is most likely more than you will ever need.. Thi represents a saving of \$69 a year over the closest competitor I have found. Since you own your own domain, if you become disenchanted with your current web space provider, you can transfer it to any provider you wish.

The bottom line here is that if you want to be in business on the web, you must have your own web presence. Don't spend your hard earned dollars unnecessarily, but don't think that you can get quality service without some investment.

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