

Web Site Hosting Decision

Richard J. Hernández, CPCM

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Once you've built your Web site, the next step is put it on a server (Web hosting computer) to allow many people secure access. Selecting the best e-commerce hosting option for your company is a critical first step toward a successful business that is either Internet-based, or uses an Internet site to augment or increase your business. You can always host your own Web site. However, a better option for most small businesses is to outsource their Web site hosting to an outside company.

Some things to look for when selecting a host for your Web site are:

- Cost. How much does the Web host charge? Are their prices reasonable?
- Experience. How much experience does the Web host have?
- Track Record. Does the Web host have satisfied customers? You can determine this by asking for references and about client turnover.
- Range of Support Services. Does the Web host provide other services such as Web site support, bulk e-mail services, online payment functions, etc?
- Technical Support. Does the Web host provide technical support? If so, is it part of your monthly fee or billed separately?
- Size. Is the Web host big enough to handle your company's current and anticipated future e-commerce needs?
- Quotas. Does the Web host have a limit on the number of mass e-mails you can send to customers and/or prospects? If so, you could quickly run up your monthly costs.
- Security. Does the Web host provide adequate protection to prevent hacking, viruses, worms, and other malicious Internet intrusions from your Web site?

The decision on how to host your company's web site can be a critical factor in the success or failure in the e-commerce world. For example, several well-known companies have had problems with overloaded web sites that take hours to access. This has resulted in lost business to other online competitors. Another example is that certain types of financial transactions, e.g., stock trades, are time sensitive and a web site problem can result in a missed opportunity and damage to client, resulting in potential lawsuits. Lastly a poor web site hosting decision can mean missing online orders and/or payments resulting in lost revenue.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. Please contact the author at:

Richard J. Hernández, CPCM

E-MBE.net

P.O. Box 617995

Chicago, IL 60661

312-404-2224

rhernandez@e-mbe.net

www.e-mbe.net

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