

Choosing the right package for your groups needs

When it comes to finding a hosting service for your group you should look into a few key factors. This can help avoid future headaches by knowing what you need from the start.

What do you plan on putting on your website? Will you have a lot of video, audio, forums? What kind of traffic do you expect to your website? Be realistic with your decision. Wanting 1000 or 2000 visitors to your website on a daily basis and actually having that many visitors are two different things. When you first start off you are probably not going to have that kind of traffic. There are many different types of hosting packages available and each one gives you a certain type of access each month for data transfer traffic. Usually anywhere between 100GB – unlimited GB.

Data transfer is the amount of information being transferred from your hosting server to the public on a monthly basis. Every time someone views your website, data is being transferred to them from the server. So if you have a 300GB transfer rate per month and a very large website, say 1 or 2gb total then your server will only allow about 250 people (or 250 page views) per month. If you have that large of a website then you probably want a higher transfer rate and a larger storage space. Let's face it, most groups or individuals are not going to have that large of a website to start off. There is always the exception though.

Now that we explained transfer rates lets talk about website space. Simply put, think of your computer hard drive. When you purchase your computer one of the key factors is how much space do you have to store files. The same thing goes for your website. With most hosting companies you can purchase anywhere in between 5GB – Unlimited GB of space. Deciding which package to get all depends on how much you plan on hosting with your website. Again, if you plan on having large files you probably want a larger package to suit your needs. The key thing to remember if you are trying to save money for your group is to start off small. Test out your needs on a monthly basis with a lower package and if you see that your start up package isn't going to have enough space for you then at that point upgrade to a higher package.

I was on the phone with a customer yesterday afternoon who was explaining to me that Homestead was charging her \$80 per month for her domain name, hosting services and other things. I was shocked. This is the kind of rate that is unheard of these days. You can go out and get a external hard drive for your computer for a lot less than that and yet they were charging her an arm and a leg for 10GB of space and a domain name. After I explained to her what my rates were, she saved herself \$914.00 for the entire year of service! Almost a \$1000 a year? That's a summer vacation right there. I can't begin to explain how happy she was that she could save that much money. She was so elated over this that she even had enough money left to purchase a website design package and STILL saved over \$500 for the year.

Reading that makes you want to jump out of your seat doesn't it! Well let's get back down to business and continue on with your groups overall needs.

Next you need to consider what other services you are going to require with your hosting package. Do you plan on having community forums or an online contact form for clients to email you? These things require two items that you will require, A database and PHP capabilities. The database will be required for your forums. It interacts between the forums and users who sign up to store their information such as login, passwords, email, all the posts they made and pertinent forum information that is needed to run it. PHP is a script tool that will be required for an online contact form. You could just as easily put a link to your email address and tell people to contact you about their problem. Instead, why not have a simple form for them to fill out so you can get unified information from each of your clients that you decide are necessary to contact them back. Most hosting packages will have these two items available with the package you purchase. Even if you don't need them right this minute, it would be wise to have them included in your package so they are available when you eventually do want them. Be weary though, if you don't see it included in the package description, call to find out if you need to purchase them separately.

If you don't know how to set these things up, it may be beneficial for you or your group to sign up for webmaster services. For a small fee each month you will get a webmaster that can update your site, setup databases and scripts so that you don't have to. Coding and HTML weren't exactly mandatory courses in high school or college, so don't feel bad if you don't know how to do these things. That's why there are experts out there to help. Don't expect someone to do the work for free though. Just like any other hard working individual, they need to make a living doing their job.

Marketing. Do you plan on marketing your group with advertising? Some hosting companies offer up free credits to use when you sign up with Google ad words or Yahoo and so on. Specifically Blitz Productions does offer these credits. Not every host will. If this is part of your plans, it will be beneficial to look for a host that can offer these types of credits. If you are going to be paying money for this it would be wise to at least go with a company that will give you these credits to test out your marketing plan.

Site Analytics. A big item involved with a hosting company is the ability to check how many people are visiting your site on a daily, monthly and yearly basis. Most all hosting companies will offer free tools to analyze your site traffic. If they don't, you will want to check elsewhere for hosting. With these tools you can see how many websites link back to your page, how many visitors you have on a daily basis (even hourly basis), what kind of internet browser they are using and much more. This allows you to cater your website to the majority. This also gives you a better idea of where your marketing is working or lacking.

"After all is said and done, how do I upload all this stuff to my website server?" Great question! Most hosting companies will offer you a FTP (File Transfer Protocol) program included on your account. Just like your "My Computer" icon on your laptop or desktop computer allows you to view the contents of your files, an FTP program allows you to access the server to upload and remove files to the internet.

If your hosting company does not offer this for free, again it is best to look elsewhere. You can use external FTP programs if you wish. Be aware though that there are free ones and the ones you will need to pay for. If all this is Greek to you, again, it may be beneficial to utilize a webmaster service so that someone can help you put it all together. You can go for weeks on end figuring out how to do it on your own but you probably have a better place to spend your time.

In the end there are many things that you will need to consider when signing up for a web hosting service. Proudly, Blitz Productions offers everything mentioned here and more. You can check out the service for yourself by going to

<http://www.blitzproductions.com>

While there you can view our hosting packages and graphics services.

We hope this article has helped you out and if you plan on looking for or transferring a hosting service, Blitz Productions would be glad to offer our assistance and save you some money and time.

Best Regards!

Blitz Productions Inc.