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Learn the benefits of moving your company's Web operations to a hosting service.

10 Reasons You Should Consider Dedicated Web Hosting

By David Hakala

When moving Web operations to a hosting service it is not enough to say, "Let's move." You have to consider what sort of new living arrangements will be made. There are three possible arrangements: managed, dedicated, and co-located hosting services. Here, we will consider the advantages of dedicated hosting services.

In a dedicated hosting arrangement, the hosting service provider supplies a physical server dedicated exclusively to your applications. Basically, you are renting an unfurnished house on the host's property. You don't have any neighbors on the other side of walls, floor, or ceiling to bother or be bothered by. You can decorate the place however you wish, within reason. The landlord is responsible for maintenance of a few basic things like plumbing connections, but generally you have to keep your place clean and tidy yourself.

Here are 10 reasons to consider dedicated hosting for your Web applications:

- 1. More physical security:** Only you and the hosting provider have access to the physical server on which your applications reside; the physical server you rent is literally kept under lock and key, in addition to other physical security measures your host may have like surveillance cameras, armed guards, biometric access control systems, etc.
- 2. More virtual security:** Because you do not share a server and operating system with others, no one else has the remote logon password to your rented server. A poorly configured application belonging to another tenant on a shared server does not leave a back door open to your applications.
- 3. More reliable bandwidth:** if you lease a 100 Mbps connection to your server, you will get all 100 Mbps all the time. If other tenants shared your server, you would lose bandwidth to them during their high-demand times. It's kind of like the water pressure in an apartment building versus a stand-alone house.

4. More reliable processing: Like bandwidth, processor power availability can vary widely on a server shared by several tenants. If some CPU-intensive application moves into a shared server, everyone else's applications may slow down.

5. More uptime: When a sink in one apartment leaks, it may be necessary to temporarily shut off the water supply to all tenants until the problem is fixed. The more tenants there are in an apartment building, the more frequently the water supply will be shut down. Likewise, in a shared hosting arrangement, one tenant's application or operating system problem may require shutting down the entire physical server for a while, putting tenants who have no problems out of commission. That doesn't happen in a dedicated hosting arrangement.

6. Usage-only cost savings: The hosting service is responsible for maintaining connectivity, an optimal physical environment for the server, and perhaps basic operating system patches and updates. You will pay for these services, but often just a fraction of what it costs to perform them in-house. You don't pay for an entire server room and HVAC system, just for the portions of them that your server uses. You don't pay a full-time system administrator, just the cost of someone's time to download and install patches occasionally. The cost of patches approaches zero when a hosting service deploys patches across thousands of servers automatically.

7. Economies of scale: Hosting operations buy hardware, software, and connectivity services for thousands of tenants at a time, and pass part of the cost savings of large-volume purchasing on to their tenants.

8. Control of applications: You get to decide what site management tools and other applications you will use, within broad constraints about what the host will allow on its property that might affect other tenants or cause the host maintenance headaches. You're not limited to a preconfigured Web server or the tools the host's administrators prefer. You don't have to wait for the host to buy new applications and make them available to tenants.

9. Better disaster preparedness: It is a rare company whose disaster preparedness equals a hosting service provider's. Hosting facilities are often fortress-like buildings painstakingly situated in locations of minimal natural disaster potential. Server rooms may be mounted on huge shock absorbers in case of earthquake. Frequent remote backups over high-speed connections protect all tenants against data loss in the event of a local disaster. Do you keep your nest egg in a mattress at home or a in bank vault?

10. Focus on improving, not maintaining: Your IT staff's time is freed from routine maintenance chores, allowing them to pay full attention to developing and fine-tuning profitable applications. Do you want your staff mindlessly applying patches to operating systems or squeezing the last ounce of performance out of your Web shopping cart?

Dedicated hosting costs a few hundred dollars per month. It is ideal for companies whose revenues can support such an expense, and whose growth demands the reliability and performance of dedicated hosting.