

Domain Names vs. Web Hosting

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? WHY AM I PAYING FOR BOTH?



The web is still a very new world for many businesses to conquer, and understanding the elements of the website can be confusing. Unfortunately that can lead to mistakes and misunderstandings. Two things that are often misunderstood are the differences between your Domain Name registration and your Web Hosting. Let's think about your website as an apartment. The address is your domain name, which points to the physical space. The physical space is your actual apartment (website) which houses all your stuff (pages, images, documents, etc.).

YOUR DOMAIN NAME

I like to explain your domain name as an apartment address. It is the name of your location. A domain name is your web address; for example: "website.com" or "website.org" or "website.net", etc.. Everyone's domain name is unique, and to launch a website, you must have one.

To obtain a domain, you have to find one that is available and purchase it through a Domain Name registration company. You can register them for 1 year or 100 years! There are benefits to investing in multiple years. The more years you invest in, the price often decreases a little per year. Search Engines will also place more value on a website whose domain name doesn't expire for a longer time. The idea is that the Search Engines believe your company will be around for a while, and because of that, they trust that the company is genuine. SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is really all about trust. Now back to the topic at hand...

Often, to save you the trouble, your web supporter will manage your Domain Registration & Renewal for you at a reasonable cost. However, many company owners want to manage their own account. This is where things can get a bit tricky. Assuming you have already registered your domain at a previous date, your domain has an expiration date. This means that unless you renew, someone else can snatch it up. The "snatchers" can be another legitimate company or someone who is buying the domain to try and sell it to you for a higher price... it feels a little like blackmail, but it's legal. So lesson one, if you plan to keep your domain, never allow it to expire!

Many unsuspecting web owners hop from one domain registration company to the next (upon renewal) due to a misleading tactic presented by less than scrupulous companies. As your domain comes up for renewal, other companies will send you warnings that your domain is about to expire and sometimes they even send bills for you to renew! These notices can be deceptive, leading the web owner to panic and renew ASAP, believing they've received a bill from their original registration company. Switching companies is not necessarily bad, but it can increase your costs as well as lead to confusion for both the website owner and the web support company. Note however, if your email is configured along with your domain name and you move your registration to a new company, you may break your email, causing you to miss important correspondence.

Domain registration fees can vary from company to company, but all are providing basically the same service plus or minus customer service.

YOUR WEB HOST

Going back to the apartment analogy, web hosting is basically paying for rent to house your website. Your website has to be located on a web server and that server needs to be maintained. This is another cost totally separate from your domain name registration (however, they can often be purchased from the same provider).

Good web server maintenance means less downtime for your website and faster loading of your webpages on other people's computers. Faster loading websites leads to more web visitors sticking around and checking out your website and its valuable content. Web hosting fees are in place to cover the cost of the server maintenance and the equipment used.

Many website support companies and IT companies provide web hosting as one of their services. There are companies all over the world that host websites. Be aware of where your web server is located physically. If doing business locally is very important to you and your organization, consider a local web hosting company.

Web hosting fees vary from company to company and besides basic hosting, what is included may vary, like the space your website takes up, email accounts, and the number of visitors you typically receive.

Bringing it all together...

Like many elements in life, it is good practice to manage all the fundamental operations of a website through one company to avoid confusion and streamline the process. Picture having your domain through one company, your hosting through a second, your web support through a third company and your SEO tackled through another! That's four separate companies to keep track of and to coordinate the efforts of one website! It is not uncommon for this separation to happen and often it can increase costs as one company is not informed of another's actions. Major headaches can result from trying to figure out who to contact in the event of website issues, especially when the four firms begin pointing fingers at each other. Ask your web support team to help you manage all your elements more efficiently. If your web support team does not manage Domain and Hosting accounts, they can likely get you set up with a trusted partner. If purchasing Domain and Hosting through a third party, try to find a company that can provide both, like www.NetworkSolutions.com or www.GoDaddy.com.