OPMC

WEB BASED BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

TOP 8
THINGS TO
CONSIDER WHEN
CHOOSING
A WEB HOSTING
PROVIDER

WELCOME
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OPMC

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+61 2 9955 2237 | Facebook | Twitter | LinkedIn
www.opmc.com.au

PRICE

THERE ARE MANY FACTORS THAT DETERMINE PRICING FOR WEB HOSTING. FOR A STANDARD BUSINESS BROCHURE WEBSITE YOU CAN EXCEPT TO PAY FROM $1 - $50 a month

When reviewing pricing of providers, we would suggest considering applying your own subjective serviceability test to help with your decision.

In other words, if you were offering these services, how often would you expect clients to make contact each year? And, would you personally be willing to service a customer for that price?

If you consider everything that could go into making your experience as a customer pleasant, and things running reliably for you - which comes with a human touch - how much would you want to charge for that if you were the provider to ensure quality?

We actively review other suppliers in the marketplace to see what they are offering. Sadly we find often the features that are touted as the key benefits of the solution, are the things that are the cheapest to provide and don't provide extra value. Our experience has proven that clients want a reliable service with real people they can contact quickly when needed.

A client of ours had their emails go down with their $5 a month provider and it wasn't until a whole week later - and well after they had moved everything to us - did they receive a response to advise their service was back up and running.

SPEED & RELIABILITY

THE SPEED AND RELIABILITY OF A WEBSITE IS DETERMINED BY A WHOLE BUNCH OF FACTORS. ONE OF THE MAIN ONES IS THE WEB HOSTING.

Many providers tout offerings of a large number of gigabytes of space and bandwidth, but this does not usually have any bearing on how fast your website loads.

In fact, most providers offering web hosting to SME's won't publish some of the more relevant determinants of page load speed.

Speed is also determined by the loading on the server. Like a train carriage, have just the right people travelling in there and it will be pleasant. But when it's overcrowded it's going to be uncomfortable. For example, taking two separate hosting providers, with identical servers hosting those websites we might see:

PROVIDER 1 - 50 SIMILAR WEBSITES HOSTED
AVERAGE FEE PER MONTH IS **$49**

PROVIDER 2 - 400 WEBSITES OF VARYING TYPES HOSTED
AVERAGE FEE PER MONTH IS **$6**

Economies of scale can be gained by the provider, allowing for lucrative low price or free trial offers. This however lowers the allocation of budget to deal with each individual client.

Some of the worst issues we see with speed are due to overcrowding and this can seriously limit the results your website can generate.

We cover speed again in Capabilities.

We experienced a client whose site was so overloaded at lunch times it didn't load half the time. And their ideal customer was coming to their website at this time.

SECURITY

Security is often an overlooked part of hosting your website. There is sometimes an assumption that web hosting providers are fully secure, but the reality is with multi billion dollar companies being hacked regularly, nothing is fully secure and a guarantee of that is merely a dangerous bet against your business!

Rather consider security as a sliding scale which can be improved with various steps. Here are a few of our favourites for SME's:

SSL encryption - This is the padlock you see in the corner of the screen. It encrypts data between the customer's computer and your website. When people fill in a form on your website, the data they type can't be accessed. SSL eliminates many basic reasons why website data can be compromised. It also can help improve your Google ranking and online reputation. This form of security shows you are a serious business and is much more commonplace and preferred than just a few years ago.

Antimalware scanning - This type of service scans your website automatically to identify malware and hacking quickly. Nowadays this is as vital to your website as it is to your computer at work and at home. It is there to more easily indentify the "trojan horse" type scenarios. We have experienced the danger of not implementing this sort of protection - a major supplier had their website covertly hacked and the hacker was logging credit card details of thousands of people when they paid. Our credit card details were compromised and this could have been identified within hours had they used this simple tool. Not all of these tools are created equal!

Managed Firewall - It is not enough to protect the inside of your site, it is also helpful to protect the outside. A managed firewall is a per website service for SME's used as an effective measure to repel virtually all easily avoidable hacking attempts.

Did you know much of the hacking out there is done by automated systems? They scan the internet for commonly known vulnerabilties with websites, and take advantage of ones with issues - all automatically. Many of these attempts are well known, a managed firewall ensures your site is not an easy target.

Encryption of data - This is a more time intensive task, but sites that store confidential data should be considering encryption as standard. It is not impossible to unencrypt data like this, but does make it more difficult for hackers to access confidential client info.

Vulnerability scanning - Cyber security experts reviewing your website can cost tens of thousands of dollars and is outside the realm of many businesses. There are solutions to scan your website for the most common vulnerabilities automatically and on an ongoing basis. Advice can then be passed on to your web developer to implement the recommendations.

LOCATION

LOCATION IS ALL ABOUT WHERE YOUR WEBSITE IS PHYSICALLY IN THE WORLD. WEBSITES ARE STORED ON COMPUTER SERVERS, USUALLY IN SPECIALIST BUILT LOCATIONS CALLED DATA CENTRES WHICH STORE SO MANY OTHER SERVERS WITH WEBSITES ON THEM.

If you'd like a morning coffee, it doesn't make too much sense to travel to the other side of the world to get it - there are so many reasons you go to your local cafe, and likewise with websites it's advantageous to have your website physically located where your customers are. (if they're all over the place, dealing with that well is also important).

With the latest Google algorithms and more sophisticated technology going into websites these days, having a fast loading website near to the people you want to visit it means better results online.

Google and other search engines are interested in ensuring their customers have an excellent experience when visiting websites, so slow loading and less relevant (ie offshore) websites are not going to have as much of an impact.

With increased physical distance also brings more hurdles to a smooth customer experience - while you can load a world on the other side of the world instantaneously, the data travels over an obstacle course of various systems to get to your computer. The more distance, the more issues occur.

We have a client who previously hosted overseas for certain reasons. Moving them to a local hosting server reduced many of the stange issues they were experiencing previously.

EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENCE IN HOSTING COUNTS THE MOST EITHER WHEN THERE IS A PROBLEM, OR IN REDUCING THE CHANCES OF A PROBLEM IN THE FIRST PLACE.

When choosing a provider consider their experience by looking at the information on their website, such as whether web hosting is a core part of their business or not. What people are saying about them on social media and sources outside their own website counts for a lot in the decision making process.

Over time we increase our investment in our team, systems, processes and procedures because we know the result it brings to clients.

A popular provider recently on Facebook, but the comments on the post were mostly negative. Do homework on the provider, interview and ask them questions to be satisfied you are comfortable moving to them.

CAPABILITIES &
DEPTH OF SERVICE

WE ARE ALL BUSY, SO DEALING WITH WEBSITE PROBLEMS IS IDEALLY AVOIDABLE

We regularly see new clients who didn't have the support they needed for their website efforts.

The reality is that many web hosting providers that spruik other services are simply not equipped to fully cater to customer needs.

Our experience shows us that when a problem occurs the cost and importantly resolution timeframe can be substantially pushed out by lack of understanding of your needs, the technology running your website, and issues with technical experience and capabilities.

Typically you may also find yourself going back and forwards between providers on technical matters well outside of your understanding or interest level, who do not wish to cooperate with each other and blame each other for the problem. Certainly this is not conducive to solving your urgent issue, and not good for your health and wellbeing!

We suggest pairing web hosting and development to a single provider to increase synergy.

We were approached by someone who eventually became a client. Her website was hacked.
Her web hosting provider advised a reasonable price to clean the site, however this providers capability and interest in a swift resolution was limited.

Three days and a heap of stress later, she moved across to us and the matter was resolved within hours.
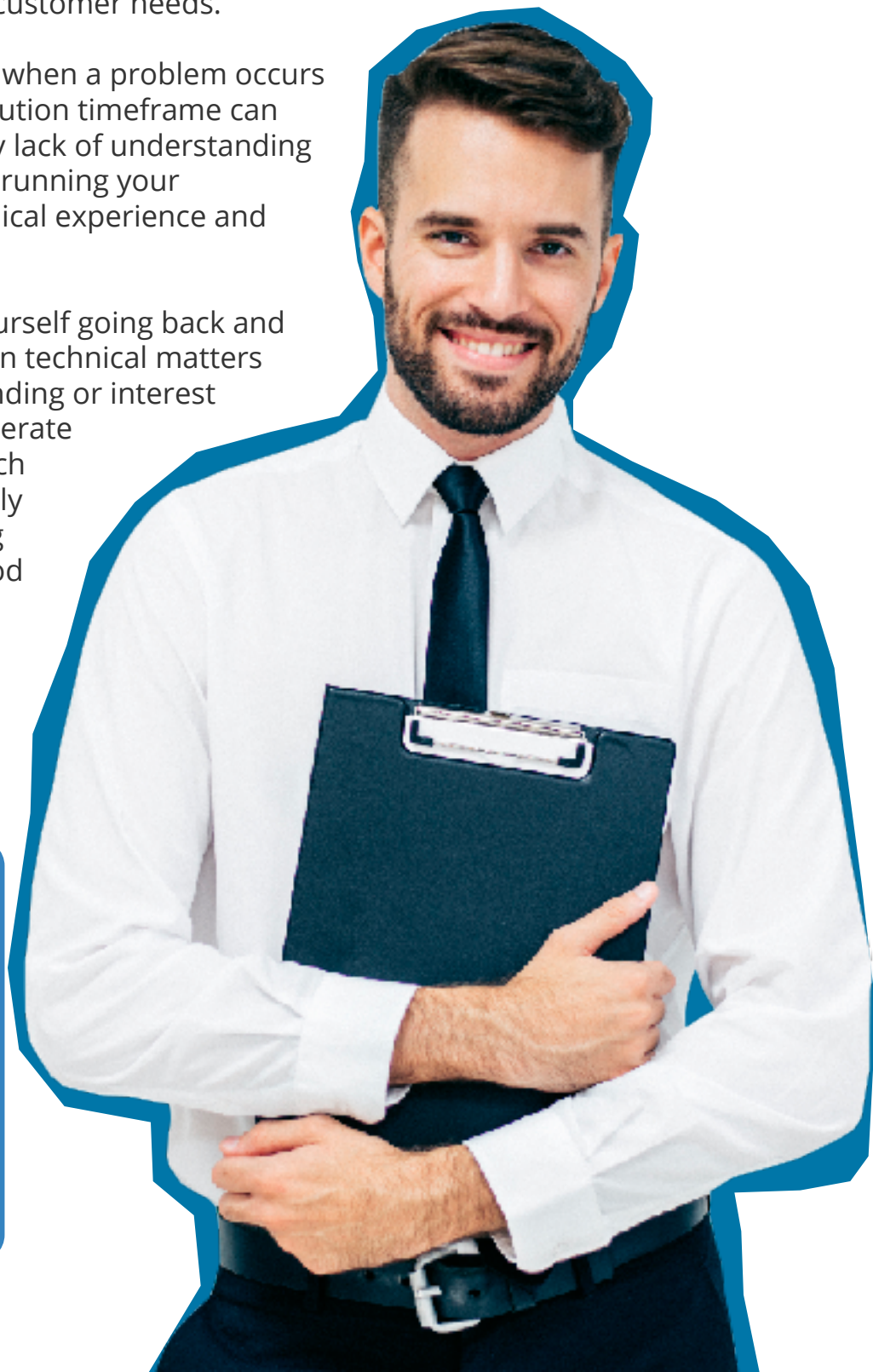
SERVICE LEVELS & RESPONSIVENESS

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT. A GREAT WAY TO TEST THIS IS SIMPLY CONTACT THE COMPANY AND SEE FOR YOURSELF.

You'll be surprised to find a range of responses - some providers will be available immediately whereas others you may never hear back from.

Some have phone numbers, others provide an email only service.

Go on social media and review websites and see what others are saying, too.

Make up your own mind based on the information you receive and the gut feeling you get about the provider. Some providers may have some bad reviews online but you find they suit you to a tee. Others may seem just perfect but disaster strikes when you actually start using them or encounter your first problem.

Some service providers may be inconsistent in their service levels. Consider asking what their support services are. If they offer 24/7 service what does that mean exactly? Email can be sent 24/7 but if they promise a 24/7 response service nowadays that means they need to be answering the phone or emails around the clock. Many providers primarily service their clients via email and internet based support systems as it is more cost effective to do so.

BACKUPS

OUR MOTTO HERE IS "BACKUP NOW, ASK QUESTIONS LATER".
SO MANY CATASTROPHIES CAN BE AVOIDED BY SIMPLE REGULAR BACKUPS.

SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK OF YOUR NEW PROVIDER :

1) How often are backups taken of my website?

2) Where are they stored? On the same server as my website or elsewhere?

3) Do I have access to download a full backup of my own website?

4) How long are backups stored for?

It is a common misconception that web hosting providers have an ongoing backup of your website and can revert back any problems from any time frame. The reality is some providers don't back up your website at all!

Be sure that you yourself have access to a regular backup of your website, on your computer, of both the website files and the database. They are not useful without both. If you need help ask a tech savvy friend to help you or contact your hosting provider.

A web hosting company was hacked and all client websites deleted. They were also able to gain access to the backup system infrastructure which was not itself backed up, and destroyed everything permanently. Data loss was permanent and many companies lost everything.