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Choices & Categories For Web Hosting Companies

Getting the right kind of web hosting is of paramount importance to a website's prospects for success, right from the very beginning. But in order to get the right kind of hosting, one needs to know all the available choices. So here's a short list of the main types and categories of hosting.

The most basic choice, as far as the consumer is concerned, is whether the hosting is shared, VPS, dedicated or cloud. There are entire books and library sections devoted to each of these types, so there's not much point in trying to explain it a paragraph here. Let's just say that each one offers increasing levels of access and resources.

So shared hosting is the lowest and most basic type, with little or no administrative rights. The tools available and scripts that can be used also vary, depending on the package and the hosting company. With VPS, the customer has much more control and flexibility. But it is still not the same as exclusive and full access to a powerful dedicated server.

Hosting on a cloud goes above and beyond all this, with the enormous capabilities of a data center available on demand. Customers usually select one of these four choices based on how big the company is and the available hosting budget, not to mention the website's current traffic and expected growth in future. Small startups and mid-level companies usually begin with shared hosting, and work their way up the ladder to a dedicated server or a shift to the cloud.

While the administration of a shared hosting server has to be managed by the hosting company, the other three offer customers a choice. The server can be either managed or unmanaged. Under managed hosting, the hosting company manages the OS, web server, etc. And all the customer has to do is use the available resources and tools to run the site. With an unmanaged server, the customer takes responsibility for the administration, including the operating system.

Another choice, also basic, is the operating system. The main choices are between a Windows server and a Unix/Linux server. Each has its benefits and disadvantages, but the Unix/Linux servers definitely have a leg up in terms of popularity. That's mostly because they're open source.

It might also have something to do with the fact that it's hard to run PHP scripts on a Windows server, so PHP-based scripts like wordpress may not work. Most customers will likely refuse any kind of hosting where it's not possible to run a wordpress blog. But a Windows server does have its advantages, especially for companies who want to run ASP scripts or use a lot of Microsoft products & services and need continuity in their web operations.

Aside from all these types, there's also the matter of choosing between different hosting companies offering all kinds of packages. Choices include metered/unmetered bandwidth and disk space for shared hosting or different server configs for dedicated servers, etc. These questions can be answered by comparing costs and checking out web hosting reviews for each provider.

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