

## Hosting options

Deciding which hosting services to go with can be compared to the decision between hiring a limousine driver or...driving your own limousine. It's all about how much work you want to do and how much you want to invest at the start of your venture. Different hosting services often use the same terms and phrases to describe what they offer, yet they can come with completely different definitions. When searching out advice, be sure to ask specific questions. For example, don't assume that "dedicated server" will always mean your host will conduct management services on your behalf.

**Colocation** would be the way to go if you own your hardware pieces already and simply need a space to put them in. If you also care to self-manage your system and have the freedom to use your own software, colocation would allow for all the advantages of remote-hosting (such as power and data backups in case of failures or crashed) while creating a custom-built information environment suitable to your company's specific needs. Colocation can be likened to simply 'renting' a condo for your server box (or boxes) and moving in your own furniture and decorations.

**Unmanaged dedicated server hosting** refers to a data center providing not only the rack space, but also the server boxes and other hardware needed for hosting. In this case, you're renting a 'furnished' apartment. You may have to go with hardware that was bought wholesale, as opposed to getting custom-built machines. The advantage is that, for a small start up, you won't have to put in the investment of getting your own equipment, especially if you don't already have it. This option is usually very basic, offering a box and space, but no hands-on help at the data center. If your company is remotely located, this could cause unwanted trouble when in-person visits need to be made to adjust the machine or do a reboot. However, usually repairs are the responsibility of the host since, after all, the equipment belongs to them, not you. Again, be sure to check on exactly what 'unmanaged' means in the host's conditions.

**Managed dedicated server hosting** is building upon the previous two models, except that now you have space, a box, and a helping hand. So, in our rental example, you get the condo, the furniture *and* meals cooked for you. Management can mean a variation of services including operating system installation, software updates, remote-handling, file backups, firewall protection, a free e-mail system and load balancing between two servers to prevent blockages in information traffic that can cause slow-downs.

**Shared hosting** can give you all of the above (depending on the specific service), except that now you don't have your own condo – you've got roommates. You will literally have less space, pun not intended. Both physically and virtually you become limited, therefore this option is only recommended for newbie sites and small businesses that don't expect a lot of traffic. Because of the decrease in quality, shared hosting is also cheaper, which is why the investment is a good one when large amounts of information and/or visitors are not a concern. The way it works is that one box acts as a hub for multiple domains on the Web and resources are shared among the different clients. This is, of course, how costs are reduced, much like sharing the bills in a condo with a roomie or two. A bank site could certainly not use a shared host, whereas someone creating a personal Web site (like a wedding story page) could.