

Choosing the Right IT Hosting Solution for Your Business



IT hosting growing as the smart choice for companies worldwide

The way small and medium-size businesses pay for and manage their information technology (IT) systems has changed dramatically over the past several years with the advent of IT hosting. Instead of buying hardware and software, and then hiring employees or contractors to manage the solution in-house, companies worldwide are increasingly outsourcing their IT systems and management tasks to IT hosting providers. (1)

The reason businesses choose IT hosting is simple. By leasing servers offsite for a monthly fee, they gain significant savings on IT costs compared with purchasing infrastructure and hiring specialized staff. Beyond the substantial cost savings, IT hosting offers access to data center infrastructure, network and technology staff that most businesses could never afford on their own. In addition to eliminating capital expenses, IT hosting also provides superior provisioning systems that give companies the flexibility to instantly scale their IT environment as needed—on demand.

Which combination of IT hosting services best fits your business?

As the popularity of leasing servers and outsourcing IT services has grown, IT hosting has evolved from simple Website hosting to highly complex configurations that include sophisticated application hosting, IT back office functions, globally localized storage, disaster recovery sites and many more critical business functions. However, with this expansion of capabilities, the range of options available to businesses has become more complex.

This white paper explains the many IT hosting options now available and is designed to help companies evaluate which IT hosting services might be best for their business.

	Data Center	Managed Hardware	Management Services	Ideal Customers
Colocation	✓	✗	✗	Mid to large-sized businesses that have mature IT staff and require ownership of servers and equipment
Shared Hosting	✓	✓	✗	Hobbyists and micro-businesses with minimal internet performance requirements
Dedicated Servers	✓	✓	✗	SMB's that require dedicated hardware to support internet requirements and have sufficient IT staff to manage their IT infrastructure
Managed Dedicated Servers	✓	✓	✓	SMB's that require dedicated hardware to support internet requirements and wish to complement their existing IT staff and improve service levels
Managed Hosting	✓	✓	+	SMB's that require dedicated hardware to support internet requirements and wish to outsource all core IT services

Figure 1: IT hosting services range from leasing data center space in colocation facilities, to shared hosting for personal or basic business Websites. Businesses that require dedicated hardware can pay a monthly fee and lease dedicated servers with options to add specialized management services as needed. Those that want fully outsourced hardware and IT administration services can choose managed hosting.

The range of IT hosting options corresponds to how much IT management companies want to assume for themselves versus how much they want to outsource. Options include a completely self-managed IT infrastructure where the hosting provider supplies only the data center environment for housing servers through colocation, up to fully managed IT infrastructure environments where staff and hardware are completely outsourced to the IT hosting provider.

Colocation

Maintaining a proper environment for your servers and IT infrastructure can be expensive. The average cost of building and provisioning data center space in the U.S. now adds up to more than \$1,300 a square foot. This amount includes building the structure, supplying it with adequate power, flooring, cooling and redundant systems, but does not include supplying the hardware, network infrastructure or hiring staff to manage and maintain it.

Colocation services are provided by hosting companies that build and maintain data centers where multiple customers locate their servers, network and storage equipment/hardware. Some also provide pre-negotiated contracts to provide interconnects to a variety of telecommunications and network service providers.

Colocation has become a popular hosting choice because it offers cost savings by using a shared data center infrastructure versus building and maintaining one yourself. Leased data center space typically offers data center power and mechanical systems while providing safe, secure housing and Internet connections with low latency.

In addition, colocation customers can reduce traffic back-haul costs and free up their internal networks for other uses. By outsourcing Internet traffic to a colocation service provider, a business typically gains greater bandwidth capacity, and improved Web site access speeds.

Guidelines for colocation hosting

You should consider colocation for your business if:

- You own your own hardware and want to keep it that way. You have either very specialized servers that are not available from Dedicated Server providers, or you've purchased hardware in the past 6 months and want to utilize your investment without the cost of expanding data center or server closet space.
- You have all the IT staff and resources you need to properly manage and maintain your hardware.
- Your IT applications do not run on a Windows or Linux operating system or your IT infrastructure requires specialized equipment such as high performance computing (HPC) servers, servers with RISC-based or Itanium processors, or large mainframe systems.

Colocation from The Planet:

The Planet's data center colocation allows you to bring in your own equipment while leveraging our SAS 70 Type II-audited data centers. The Planet delivers colocation options with secure, competitively priced solutions for small- to medium-size businesses, up to enterprise-class organizations. All Planet colocation customers receive the following advantages along with optional managed services and support available on-demand:

- Dedicated floor space in SAS 70 Type II-audited data centers
- Locking cabinets or cages to house servers, along with access to The Planet's high-speed network
- Remote hands and eyes services available 24 x 7
- 100% power and network Service Level Agreements
- Operating lease options available for hardware

Dedicated cabinets for your servers start at \$1,000 per month and can scale depending on the number of servers and space needed.

Shared Hosting

Shared hosting is the most basic form of IT hosting today, servicing millions of Web sites. Individuals and businesses that subscribe to shared hosting are given the basic options for hosting a Web site without the ability to define the level of hardware that will service their needs. Shared hosting is typically used for personal Web sites that exhibit very low levels of Internet traffic or simple e-commerce sites that require little to no support for demanding applications. Shared hosting will often provide basic backup options but little or no scalability to manage sudden changes or spikes in Web traffic or e-commerce demand. Shared hosting prices can start as low as \$5 dollars a month for basic Web site hosting.

Dedicated, Managed Dedicated and Managed Hosting

Once you know that you need more than shared hosting and don't have the specialized needs of colocation, the key question becomes: how much do you want to outsource in terms of IT support and management services? As the IT hosted services diagram in Figure 1 illustrates, you have several options:

1. You can self-manage a leased dedicated server relying on your own IT resources and staff.
2. You can augment that dedicated server with fee-based services from the hosting provider using managed dedicated servers.
3. You can completely outsource the hardware and management of a leased IT infrastructure to experts supplied by the hosting provider through managed hosting.

Guidelines for dedicated and managed hosting:

Deciding what is best for your company requires a more detailed examination of how many activities you want your staff to perform and how much you want the hosting provider to perform. That means giving thought to several questions:

- Do you have enough full/part-time staff to self-manage all servers in your IT infrastructure? If not or if you prefer not to staff up, you have options to get various services from the IT hosting provider that range from simple monitoring tasks to the investigation of critical incidents and proactive planning.
- How much performance does your Web presence or IT infrastructure demand? Providers often have a wide variety of technology available ranging from older low-cost to current high-performance hardware. Knowing your performance requirements is essential to maximizing your hosting budget.
- Will you need more than just power and network uptime guarantees? Many users consider adding service levels that include 1-hour hardware replacement in case server components malfunction. Other customers may need a critical incident response guarantee for a specified time period: e.g. 15-minute guaranteed response time.

Self-Managed Dedicated Servers

Dedicated Server hosting is provided by companies that lease the use of servers and network equipment to each customer. This is more flexible than a shared hosting model, since businesses have full control over their equipment and how it is configured, including choice of operating systems, processor level, amount of memory, etc. Specific server administration tasks can be provided by the hosting company as add-on services. Dedicated servers are most often housed in data centers that provide redundant power and network sources and HVAC systems. In contrast to colocation, the server hardware is owned by the hosting provider but managed by the customer leasing the servers.

Self-Managed Dedicated Servers from The Planet:

From a single Web server to a comprehensive multi-server solution, dedicated hosting from The Planet gives you the hardware, support and self-service tools you need to implement a world-class hosted infrastructure, all for a low monthly price. The Planet's Dedicated Server solutions offer a complete set of options to manage your hosted solution including:

- A wide range of Dell servers to fit every level of performance and budget
- All the tools you need to remotely self-manage your hosted environment
- Fast provisioning with many servers available within 1 hour
- 24x7x356 technical support available on-demand to respond to your special needs
- Network upgrades for private back-end networks, server-allocated bandwidth pooling and load balancing
- Dedicated Cisco ASA hardware firewalls available to improve security and create network segmentation
- **Storage options provide solutions that meet your performance and cost requirements:**
 - Direct Attached Storage (DAS) devices provide a flexible storage extension to your servers
 - Dedicated Storage Area Network (SAN) provides high performance for mission-critical storage
 - The Planet's Storage Cloud provides unlimited scalability and high-availability in a utility-based storage platform
 - Multiple backup options are available to ensure your data is protected
 - The Planet's Content Delivery Network provides rapid distribution of Web and streaming media content through our network of globally distributed servers

A dedicated server from The Planet starts as low as \$89 per month and scales up depending on your hardware and infrastructure needs.

Dedicated Servers combined with Management Services

Management services enhance your dedicated servers by adding specific IT hosting services performed by specialized technicians ready to respond to your support incidents. These services are typically associated with simple routine tasks such as monitoring and patching servers, maintaining storage and backup options, and responding to security incidents.

Managed Dedicated Servers from The Planet:

The Planet's Alpha Advanced Services and Alpha Professional Managed Dedicated Servers are designed to deliver enterprise-class service levels and high-quality support. Whether you have a single server or a multi-server, backend-connected infrastructure, The Planet lets you customize the level of management to support your infrastructure. Alpha Advanced Services offer a la carte management services that can be added to any Dedicated Server. With Alpha Professional Managed Dedicated Servers, you gain access to a team of certified engineers available 24 x 7 to support and respond to your technical needs.

The Planet's Alpha Advanced Services are available on all Dedicated Servers with the following options:

- Alpha Server Monitoring provides 24 x 7 monitoring and response
- Alpha Server Security provides server hardening, patching and security management

- Alpha Managed Backup provides daily backups to ensure your critical data is always backed up and protected
- Alpha Server Administration provides on-demand system administration, migration and custom issue resolution from our team of hosting experts

The Planet's Alpha Professional Managed Dedicated Servers provide the following benefits in addition to The Planet's Dedicated Servers:

- First-call resolution - a certified engineer is assigned as a single point of contact for each support incident
- First line of defense - 24 x 7 x 365 server monitoring and response
- Business-class Service Level Agreement (SLA), including 1-hour hardware replacement
- Fully managed customizable daily backups of your hosted environment

Alpha Advanced Services starts at a \$25 per month upgrade to your Dedicated Server. Alpha Professional Managed Dedicated Server is a \$125 per month upgrade to your Dedicated Server.

Managed Hosting

Further enhancing the dedicated server hosting model, Managed Hosting integrates a premium level of management services to your hosted IT infrastructure. Customers are assigned a dedicated team of senior certified engineers that proactively manage the environment. This staff specializes in the specific technologies of a hosted environment and is accountable for optimizing their respective areas of expertise.

Managed Hosting offsets the need to hire dedicated IT staff to provide core IT services. This represents a change in IT management practices for many small to medium-sized businesses that are overextending their existing IT administrative staff and lack access to sufficient specialized resources to manage their information systems. With Managed Hosting, companies are able to completely outsource the daily management of the underlying infrastructure to the hosting provider and shift their focus to developing their application or other more strategic IT objectives.

Managed Hosting from The Planet:

Managed Hosting from The Planet offers a dedicated enterprise-class IT infrastructure combined with an assigned team of senior certified engineers with the specialized IT skills and hosting expertise needed to proactively support and maintain the IT infrastructure for any size business, including small- and medium-size enterprises.

As your IT hosting partner, Northstar Managed Hosting provides the enterprise-class processes and procedures, the technology, services and dedicated engineers who are accountable for your company's success. By partnering with Northstar Managed Hosting to fully manage your IT infrastructure, your existing IT staff can function more as a strategic technology group that focuses exclusively on your business.

Northstar Managed Hosting from The Planet includes the following:

- Dedicated team of certified engineers with a technical account manager, senior DBA, senior systems administrator, and a senior network security engineer that work together plan and manage your environment
- Proven best-practices Anticipation Advantage methodology to ensure consistent service delivery aligned with your business and IT goals
- Enterprise-class Service Level Agreement includes 100% power and network guarantees with 1-hour hardware replacement and 15-minute critical incident response time
- The latest name-brand hardware with redundant and high-availability configurations available

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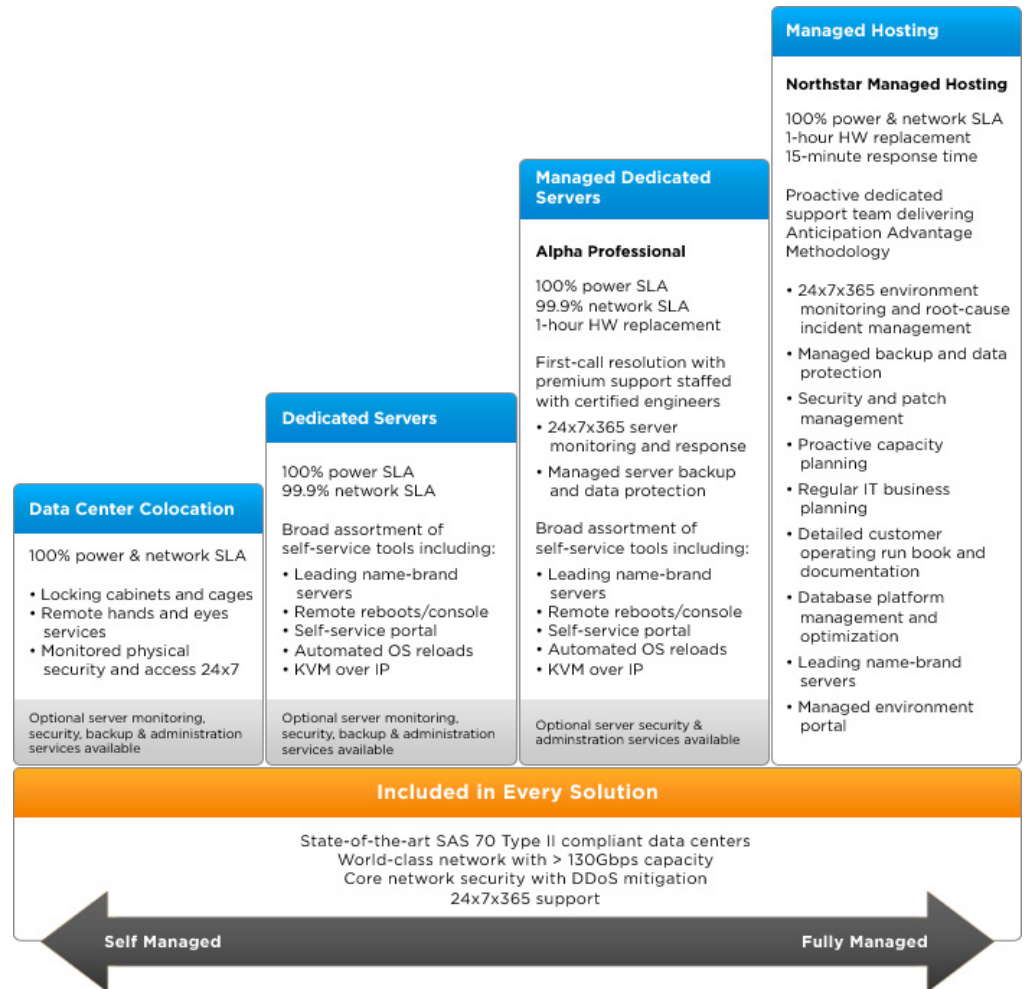
- First line of defense security providing 24 x 7 x 365 server monitoring and root-cause incident management with vendor escalation
- Fully managed customizable daily backups of your hosted environment
- Security and patch management customized for your IT operations
- Proactive capacity planning with consultative recommendations that align with your business growth plans
- Detailed environment run-book with documented operating procedures and custom escalation processes

A Northstar Managed Hosting solution begins around \$2,000 per month for a complete entry-level configuration and can scale depending on your hardware and infrastructure needs.

Choose an IT hosting provider that gives you the full range of options

Unlike some IT hosting providers, The Planet offers a seamless IT hosting continuum of service that spans a complete range of infrastructure options. The Planet's service continuum includes colocation facilities and services, self-managed dedicated servers, and tailored management services that can be expanded to fully outsourced managed hosting solutions. The diagram below illustrates this continuum. For the small- to medium-sized business, The Planet's service continuum means you get the most flexible combination of hosting infrastructure and managed services available to meet your budgetary needs throughout your business lifecycle.

By bringing a new, seamless level of comprehensive infrastructure and managed services to the hosting market, The Planet gives small- and medium-sized businesses the power to choose -- and pay for -- only the right combination of infrastructure and services best suited to support their business model. Offering colocation facilities and services, self-managed, dedicated servers, and management services that can be expanded to fully outsourced managed hosting solutions, The Planet delivers these key benefits:



- You can grow your business as fast as you want, with a fully scalable IT infrastructure and managed services whenever you need them. You're able to add capacity and expertise immediately, without the substantial capital investment normally required to buy hardware, software and hire expert talent.
- You don't have to buy or invest in more IT infrastructure or expertise than you need at any given moment. This helps preserve precious funds and staff resources so you can focus on gaining customers and growing your business rather than on IT demands.
- You don't have to sacrifice quality, reliability or capacity because of any single hosting provider's limitations or business model. With The Planet, you choose from a complete infrastructure and services continuum. There's no need to switch providers because you can't get what you need to support your business goals.

Learn more about your IT hosting options

Given the significant benefits of IT hosting and the many options now available, The Planet encourages you evaluate its potential more closely. For more information contact a Business Technology Advisor at The Planet by calling toll free **866-325-0045** or emailing The Planet at hosting-advice@theplanet.com.

About The Planet

The Planet is the leading provider of On Demand IT Infrastructure solutions, hosting more than 25,000 small- and medium-size businesses and 14.1 million Web sites worldwide. With the best choice of servers, software tools and world-class support, backed by state-of-the-art facilities and an enterprise-class network, The Planet turns IT into a powerful competitive advantage that enables customers to grow their businesses. For additional information, visit <http://www.theplanet.com>.