Profusion Web Solutions

What To Look For In A Website Host

Slide 1: (Video starts to : 17 seconds) - Hi, my name is Patrice Valentine. I'm the president and owner of ProFusion Web Solutions. And today we're going to be looking at your website hosting. Maybe not a topic that everyone is just, you know, itching and excited to learn about, but something that is very important to your online business.

Slide 2: What we'll cover today (00:18-1:07) - Let's take a quick look at what we'll be covering in today's session. First, we're going to break down the basics, what website hosting actually is and why that matters for your business. Then we'll talk about the key components of good hosting, what to look for, what to avoid, and how to know if your current hosting setup is helping or even potentially hurting your online presence. Next up, we'll touch on email hosting because where your email lives can impact both your brand and your email deliverability. We'll also take a moment to explain the difference between website maintenance and web master services since those two are often confused, but play very different roles in keeping your site healthy and running smoothly. Finally, we'll tie it all together by discussing why all of this matters for your business and how understanding your hosting setup can help you make smarter, more cost-effective decisions online.

Slide 3: Understanding website hosting (1:08-2:12) - When we talk about website hosting, think of it like the digital real estate for your business. Just like your brick-and-mortar location needs a physical street address, your website needs a home on the internet. That's what web hosting provides. It's a space where all of your files live so people can actually access your site online. Without hosting, your domain name would just be a sign with no building behind it. Hosting is what makes your website functional and visible. So, when someone types in your web address, the www.yourbusiness.com, there's actually something there to load. In other words, no hosting, no website. Hosting is typically paid monthly or yearly as a service. Providers rent out the space on their servers, kind of like leasing property for your online business. Whether you're launching a brand new site or you're just wondering, you know, what you're actually paying for each month, remember, hosting is the foundation that keeps your business visible online. Again, it is not a topic that people love to think about or really have a really solid understanding on what it means, but good hosting can be one of the best insurance policies for your online business.

Slide 4: What is website hosting (2:13-3:08) - So, what is hosting exactly? At its core, hosting is where your website lives online. Again, when you pay for hosting, you're essentially renting space on a powerful computer called a server. The server is connected to the internet 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, keeping your website available day and night. That server stores everything that makes up your website. All the text, the images, the design files, the database, all that behind-the-scenes code, all of that is stored on the server. How it works is when someone types in your web address into their browser, their device, their computer for example, connects to your hosting server, the server then sends back all the necessary files and content so your website can appear in their browser. Hosting really is, like I've said, the backbone of your online presence. Without it, your website is just a stack of code that is inaccessible to the world.

Slide 5: Essentials components of good hosting (3:09-6:00) - When it comes to choosing good website hosting, there are a few key features that can make a big difference in how your website performs and how customers perceive your business. First up, let's talk about the SSL certificate. SSL stands for Secure Sockets Layer. It's what encrypts the data sent between your website and the people visiting it. If you've ever noticed a little padlock icon or HTTPS at the start of a web address, that's the SSL at work. So, why do we care about the SSL, and why does that matter? First, for security. It protects sensitive information like contact form submissions or payment details that are being transmitted from your user's computer to your server. So, as I'm typing in, you know, my credit card information on a website, once I hit submit, that SSL is what's going to secure and encrypt that data that is being sent from my computer to the server where your website is hosted. Second is the trust factor. The SSL shows your visitors that your site is safe and professional. Third is for SEO or search engine optimization purposes. Google favors secure websites. They actually came out in like 2008, so a very long time ago, and said that an SSL was basically a must-have now, that Google was pushing for a more secure web. So, sites that don't have an SSL are at a big disadvantage in the search results. Next, we look at speed and performance. This is all about how fast your website loads when someone visits. And trust me, speed really does matter. First, for the user experience. If your site takes too long to load, most people won't wait. They'll just hit that back button and go find an alternate solution. Second is again for search rankings. Google knows website speed, so they reward faster sites and they penalize slower ones. Again, if we try and get into the head of Google a little bit, Google wants you to find what you're looking for. They want you to be able to trust their results. They want you to find good data using the Google search engine. So, if they consistently see a website where, you know, if people are visiting the website and they're

immediately bouncing, meaning they're they're leaving the website as, you know, almost as soon as they hit it, they're hitting that back button to leave the website, Google is going to recognize this, and it potentially could be because of a speed and performance issue, and they will start penalizing the slower websites. The third reason why we don't want to have a website that has solid speed and performance is for conversions. A faster site keeps people engaged longer and increases the chance that they're going to take action, like making that purchase or filling out that contact or estimate request form. So, when you're evaluating a hosting provider, make sure they offer solid security options and strong performance. These two elements are foundational for a website that not only works, but that works well.

Slide 6: Essentials components of good hosting (6:01-7:56) - There are two other essential components, and these two are uptime guarantee and regular backups. First up, when we talk about uptime guarantees is a promise that a hosting provider is going to make to you about a certain percentage of uptime. You're going to see this usually as something like 99.9% uptime. This means that they're committing to keeping your website online and accessible nearly all the time. 99.9% of the time. And again, why does that matter? Let's let's talk through this. Well, first, your website is your business's digital storefront. Customers expect it to be open basically 24/7. If your site is down, even for a short amount of time, you could lose sales, leads, and potentially some credibility as well. People are trying to go to your site, and they can't access it. Think of downtime like having your store closed during peak hours. It can be an absolute confidence killer for your customers if they're trying to visit you and you're not available. Same thing for your website. Now, when we look at regular backups, this is essentially your safety net. Your website host should take regular snapshots of your entire website. That means your files, the images, the database, everything. This is important because if you have a disaster happen, which does happen, like your site might get hacked, an update might not go correctly, files can get deleted by accident. Let's say you finally trust, you know, that new intern to add a page to your website, and all of a sudden, pages are missing. A good backup is going to allow you to roll back to a clean version of the website and get back online quickly. Regular backups also give you a peace of mind. Knowing that your site can just be restored with just a few clicks or a phone call to the support center means you can focus on running your business instead of having to worry about all those worst-case scenarios together. Again, uptime and backups, those two elements are going to help ensure that your website is not only performing well, but it's also protected against disruption.

Slide 7: Why would anyone hack my site (7:57-10:38) - Now, I mentioned that having a regular backup would be a great thing to have on the off chance or on the chance that your website gets hacked. And most of the time when I talk about this with small business owners, I hear them say, "Oh, I just I just run a small a small business website. No one's going to hack my site. No, no one's interested in hacking my site. They're I don't I don't take credit cards, so no one's going to want to hack my site." Well, on average, approximately 30,000 websites are hacked every day globally. This number includes both large and small businesses, with small businesses being targeted in 43% of these attacks. So if you have a small business, if you have a website, your website is on the target list. Now, it's not personal. They're not thinking that you're a bad person, and they don't like your business and so therefore they want to hack your site. Hackers are often using automated tools that scan the web looking for websites with outdated software, weak passwords, or other vulnerabilities. These tools don't care if your business is big or small. They're just looking for easy targets. And if they hack into your site, here are some of the things they may be doing with it. So again, if you don't have credit cards or social security numbers stored on your website, they still might be using your website as a tool of sorts. Your site can be hijacked to send spam, run fishing scams, or even spread malware, often without you realizing it. But typically, your visitors might they might receive those emails that are, you know, from your domain-based email address or that's using your information. So they might be using your website as a tool. They might be hijacking your traffic. A hacker can redirect your customers to a shady or malicious website or even insert spammy links onto your website that help boost their own sites in the search results. This also can affect your search engine optimization. Getting hacked can seriously hurt your search rankings. If Google detects suspicious activity, it can flag your site or even block access to it completely. So, it might give people that that warning screen before they're even allowed to go to your website saying that that they have identified this site as being suspicious. And then it's up to the user to choose whether they want to go forward and go against Google's recommendation or if they wanted to go back to the search results. Even a simple website, a digital brochure, for example, with basic contact information, can be valuable in the wrong hands. And recovering from a hack takes time. It takes money and it can damage your brand's reputation. That's why even with hosting, basic security practices like SSL certificates, regular software updates, and backups matter so much. No matter how simple your website is, protecting your site protects your business, your customers, and your credibility.

Slide 8: Hosting – beyond the basics (10:39-13:55) - So, we've looked at a few of those basic elements in hosting, but let's just take a look at at things that I would recommend after being in this industry for for over 20 years. So those those four basic ones are things that are kind of non-negotiables, right? And and these are as well, but these are just things to to add on and to consider when you're looking at hosting. First up is robust security measures. Good hosting should come with built-in protection. Things like firewalls, malware scanning, DDoS protection. Again, you might be saying, "I have no idea what that is." That's direct denial of service protection. And if someone's just really, you know, they're they're just trying to gain access to your site, whether it's filling out a a login form or filling out a contact form, whatever they're trying to do, they're just trying to spam into your website as fast as they can, there should be some level of of protection against that. And same thing with intrusion detection. Even if your site doesn't handle sensitive data, again, like credit cards and social security numbers, these tools are essential to protect you from cyber threats, hacking attempts, and website defacement. This is like locking your doors to your house, right? So, having these security measures, it would be; without these, it's like leaving your house unlocked or going on vacation with a garage door open. So you want to make sure things are locked up. Even if you don't think anyone's going to target you, it's way better to be safe than sorry on this. The second thing with with again kind of beyond the basic hosting is take a look at the plugins. I'm going to call these extras, but what I'm really talking about is is the tools that make your website work. So, you know, maybe you run an e-commerce store and you want to integrate your shipping with with UPS. There might be a plugin that is used in order to make that connection between your website and UPS happen. Quite often, a hosting company will charge a base rate for hosting and then additional fees for plugins. Again, that makes perfect sense if you have some custom, you know, capabilities on your site that requires a plugin that is specific for your company. However, check with your host to see what is available and included with your hosting. Licenses for plugins typically renew annually. So, make sure you know who's in charge of of renewing that, who's going to pay for it, who's going to update the license on the back end of your website, and then who's going to do the compatibility checks to make sure that the the plugin that you've just purchased or that you've just renewed is still really compatible with your website. And then finally, I feel like this goes without saying, but just a reminder, you want to make sure that you've got a company that has responsive customer support and that you're not going to be on hold forever or online with a chatbot that just keeps redirecting you to some knowledge base when something goes wrong. And let's be honest, tech hiccups happen. Things get deleted accidentally. You know, sometimes those buttons say save or, you know, delete, and we we sometimes hit delete on accident. So, you want to

look for a hosting provider that offers some level of support with multiple ways to reach out to them, a phone number being available and and being able to call the phone. If there is online chat or email, what does that support look like? And then, is there is there response time quick and reliable? That's going to mean less downtime, less stress, and a smoother experience for both you and your customers. So really comprehensively, these features create the foundation that helps your website perform well, stay protected, and then grow with you.

Slide 9: Maintenance vs Support (13:56-16:02) - Let's take a moment to talk about website maintenance. Because even if you're not making visible changes to your site, the behind-the-scenes work is what keeps everything running reliably and securely. Think of website maintenance like regular car care. You don't wait for the engine to break down on the freeway before you change the oil or take some preventative measures, right? The same principle applies here. Website maintenance is all about keeping the engine running smoothly so your site stays fast, secure, and functional. Here's what it usually involves. The first is software updates. That means keeping your content management system, things like WordPress or Squarespace. Keeping that that up to date, the themes and plugins up to date. This is crucial for preventing security vulnerabilities and ensuring your site performs as expected. On the previous slide, we talked about 30,000 websites a day getting hacked. 72% of those are hacked because of a software vulnerability. And that typically means their software was out of date. The vulnerability had been identified and they just hadn't updated the the patch to that vulnerability yet. So, their site was just was just available to be to be hacked into. So, that is crucial. Making sure those software updates happen is crucial for preventing preventing security vulnerabilities. Maintenance also includes security monitoring. Scanning for malware, keeping an eye out for suspicious activity, and patching any of those vulnerabilities that do pop up. Even small sites like we talked about can be targets. So, this isn't something to skip. Maintenance also includes performance optimization. things like cleaning up your database, setting up caching properly, optimizing images so your site loads quickly and smoothly for your visitors. It's all of this small stuff that most people don't see, but if it's neglected, your site can slow down, it can break, or it can get hacked. And again, we talked about it can also be bad for search engine optimization. So, it'll make it so it it's harder to be found in the search engines. So, just like your car needs that routine service to stay safe on the road and to keep it running, your website needs that regular maintenance as well. that's going to keep it safe and free from hackers and effective online.

Slide 10: Maintenance vs Support (16:03-17:39) - Now that we've talked about maintenance, that behind-the-scenes type tuneup stuff, let's take a look at the other side that keeps your website up to date, and that's web master services, or what we often just call support services. This is all about actively managing and updating your website's content and structure, the things your customers actually do see when they visit your site. For example, things like content changes, updating text on existing pages, posting a new blog article, maybe refreshing your homepage messaging, or adding a new product or service. Things like that would be content changes. Adding new sections, whether that's a new service page, maybe you're you're going to start running some ads, or you have an event coming up and you want a landing page for that, a new campaign happening, or even a new product listing. Support would also include things like media updates, swapping in new photos, adding testimonial videos, changing your staff headshots as people come and go. It also includes minor design tweaks, maybe adjusting the layout, tweaking the fonts, trying some new colors to align with maybe some new branding. That would all be part of what we would call support. And same thing with troubleshooting. So, if there's if there's things that just don't look right or they're not working the way they should, general troubleshooting is also going to fall under this this support umbrella. If website maintenance is like changing the oil, consider web master services more like cleaning the car or adding new features to it, changing the stereo system, something like that. It's how your site evolves and adapts to your changing business needs. Both sides, maintenance and support, are really important. One keeps the foundation strong, the other keeps your content fresh and relevant.

Slide 11: Understanding email hosting (17:40-21:59) - I did have to take a few minutes here to talk about email hosting as well, because how your email is set up can impact everything from day-to-day communication to your business's professionalism and reliability. Let's just kind of talk through the two different kinds of email approaches that we have. The first is collocated email. This is when your email, so your name @yourbusiness.com, is hosted on the same server as your website. This is a pretty common setup, especially with a lot of basic hosting plans where email services are included. So, if you have a hosting plan that comes with two free email addresses, it's likely that your email is hosted on the same server as your website. The big advantage here is simplicity. It's pretty easy to get started. It's often bundled at no cost or or a little extra cost and keeps everything in one place, which can be super convenient, especially for smaller

or newer businesses. However, there are some limitations to be aware of. You may have limited storage depending on your host. So, you might not be able to have, you know, the two gigabytes of storage that you might have on an alternate solution. Spam filtering and security features may not be as advanced as a dedicated email host. And because your email and website share the same server, this is the big one. If your site goes down, your email could temporarily be affected, too. So if your site goes down and your email goes down, it leaves you with very few options to communicate with your customers and to allow your customers to communicate with you. Now let's take a look at separate, or what we would call, professional email hosting. This is when your email is hosted independently by a dedicated service like our own Smarter Mail, Microsoft 365, or Google Workspace. These platforms offer typically high reliability and uptime even under heavy use. Advanced features like large storage, shared calendars, collaborative tools like online chat, potentially. They also offer enhanced security and protection from phishing and spam and scalability, making it pretty easy to add or remove users as your team grows. The main consideration here is the cost, as separate hosting charges. They typically charge by the user, and some of them on the high end can be over $50 per user per month, depending on the services added. For businesses that rely heavily on email for customer service, team collaboration, or sales, a separate professional email solution is typically the best fit as it offers more tools, better deliverability options, and long-term flexibility. So, while both approaches are valid, understanding how they differ helps you choose the right setup based on how your business communicates.

Slide 12: Use domain-based email (20:18-21:59) - Now, the marketing person in me really couldn't do this whole presentation without just adding in this slide about actually use domain-based email. Please, let's talk about your email address because, believe it or not, what comes after the at symbol can make a big difference in how your business is perceived. If you're still using a Gmail, Yahoo, or Outlook, or even AOL email address for your business, uh, if you're doing something like ProFusiongmail.com, for example, it's time to consider making a switch. A domain-based email address like info@ProFusionebsolutions.com

instantly makes your business look more professional and established. It tells people that you're legit and that you've invested in your brand. Using a free personal email might be fine when you're just starting out, but it can actually hurt your credibility. It looks less trustworthy, especially to new customers or professional contacts, and it definitely doesn't

help you reinforce your brand. Every time you're sending an email, you're promoting Gmail or Yahoo instead of promoting your own business and brand name. On the other hand, if you're using domain-based email, your brand gets delivered with every single message. It helps with email deliverability, too, as messages from branded domains are less likely to end up in someone's spam folder. Another note about domain-based email is when you're ready to grow your team, it's easier to manage multiple addresses like billing@ at or support@ at or even adding that info@ or individual names all under your own domain name rather than trying to find some combination of something that works at Gmail or at Yahoo. Bottom line, if you have a business, your email should reflect it. This is a small upgrade that makes a big impact on how professional and trustworthy your business looks to the outside world.

Slide 13: Why are hosting fees so varied? (22:00-24:12) - All right, let's talk a little bit more about hosting and specifically hosting prices. We get this question a lot on talking about why are hosting fees so varied. You might see hosting offers for $5.99 a month all the way up to, you know, 600 or more per month. So, what gives? At the low end, you're looking at what's called shared hosting. That means your website is sitting on the same server as dozens or potentially even hundreds of other websites. It's affordable, but you're sharing resources, which can affect speed and reliability. Support on these services or on these hosting providers might be minimal, might be chat-only support, and extras like backups or security monitoring are either going to be DIY or they're going to be an extra charge. Mid-range hosting, that's the 50 to 150ish per month, is often what's called managed hosting. This is where most small businesses are going to thrive. These plans typically include better performance, automatic updates of your software, regular backups, strong security, and reliable communication and support. This is where you're going to get a little bit more peace of mind built in, as you're not having to DIY any of the solutions on the hosting side of things. On the higher end, plans priced at 300 and up are usually what's called dedicated servers, maybe VPS, which is a virtual private server, or cloud hosting. These are designed for websites with large traffic volumes or complex functionality, potentially some larger-scale e-commerce platforms and web apps. When you're looking for hosting as a small business, you simply want to focus on the again the fast hosting, secure, reliable, and supported. You want those daily backups, strong security features, find that 99.9% uptime, and someone you can actually talk to if something goes wrong. And then don't forget about scalability. Obviously, your business will grow and your website will will need to be able to grow with it. And so, make sure you have a a host that is able to scale as your business grows as well. Bottom line, you don't have to overpay, but avoid the bargain basement

hosting. If you want your site to perform like a professional business, you might have to pay a little bit more for that.

Slide 14: Why this matters for your business? (24:14-25:32) - Let's wrap up with a quick review of what we've covered today and why it all matters. First, focus on your core business. Understanding the basics of hosting and having the right support team in place, whether it's for maintenance or content updates, it frees up your time. You get to focus on what you do best while your website stays in good hands. Second, it allows you to avoid technical headaches. You don't need to become an IT expert to have a great online presence with a reliable hosting provider and a knowledgeable web partner. All the complicated stuff can be handled for you. We're not saying you can't do it. We're simply saying if you're running your business, you're going to want to be able to have the time to run your business and not worry about whether or not a backup was made of your website or not. Next, we talked about professionalism and security. A fast, secure website and always online website builds trust with your customers and shows you take your business seriously. It also really helps protect your brand's reputation. And we talked about the impact on your bottom line. A well-maintained website isn't just a digital brochure. It's a powerful tool that can attract more leads, drive sales, support your marketing efforts around the clock. And finally, futureproofing. By understanding how all these pieces fit together, hosting, maintenance, support, email hosting, you're in a better position to make smart and informed decisions as your business grows and evolves.

Slide 15: Start smart (25:33-27:47) - And again, we we want to help you start smart here. So, hosting just isn't another line item in your budget. It's an investment in your business's online success. It's the foundation everything else is built on. When you understand the key components of good hosting, the things we've reviewed today, you're empowered to make smart choices about your platform, your providers, and your priorities. Make sure you are prioritizing things like reliability, security, and performance. These aren't just technical terms that we like to throw around. They are what keep your site online, trustworthy, and ready to serve your customers. Know the difference between website maintenance and web master support. So you can manage your site effectively without getting overwhelmed. And this also really helps you understand what you're paying for. So if you know that your website is being well-maintained because all of your, you know, software applications are being up to date, everything is being backed up as it should be, you know, your plugins are being up to date and the licenses are being managed, that's all the maintenance side of

things that can and should potentially be included with your fully managed hosting. And then again, your web master support is going to be more along the lines of making those additional updates to your site, adding pages, adding content, um, changing out graphics, things like that. Finally, partner with someone who can take the technical burden off your plate so that you can get back to doing what you do best, running your business. I think small business owners tend to get in the frame of mind of because I can, I should, and and I think that if if you learn anything from this presentation today, allow us to take that off your plate. Go with a professional solution that handles all of these things. Again, reliability, security, and performance. Those aren't just buzzwords. Those are actual things that need to be happening with your website host. Your host needs to be up and reliable. It needs to be secure. Those 30,000 websites a day that are getting hacked. Let's make sure yours isn't one of them. And then your site needs to perform well. It needs to load quickly. It needs to make sure that it's it's viewable on all devices. So, make sure you're prioritizing and really taking a look at again reliability, security, and performance. And partner with someone who understands all that and can take that technical burden off your plate.

Slide 16: Question's + more (27:48-28:55) - Hopefully, we've given you enough information to at least have a grasp on what hosting is and why you want might want to start kind of paying attention to what good hosting can actually do for your company. You may have some questions on this. We do send out a newsletter weekly. So if you want to sign up for that to get the information ahead of time, go to our website there, ProFusionwebsolutions.com/newsletter.

We are always available to take an email. So send an email to info@ProFusionwebsolutions.com. If you put my name in front of that, just patrice@ProFusionolutions.com. You can get an email directly to me. Our mainline phone numbers on the screen. And then we do post regular helpful information to our social medias almost daily. Uh whenever we find some industry knowledge or things that make us chuckle about the industry, we put that out on socials and would appreciate the follow or the like. I've got our Instagram page up there today, but we also have LinkedIn as well as Facebook if you'd like to connect with us on any of those. Again, we'd love to answer your questions. So, if you have any questions or need more information, or just want to chat about hosting, cuz who doesn't, hit us up at the information on the screen now.