

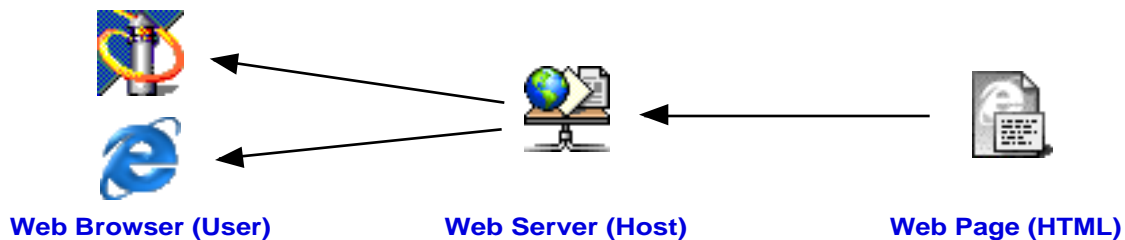
DATABASE BY DESIGN, INC.

Hosting: Not Always a Party What you need to know about database-driven web sites

If you have decided to create a database driven web site, how do you make sense of all the service and software hosting options that are available? Let's start by looking at what is involved in hosting regular and database driven web sites.

The Basics: Simple Web Serving

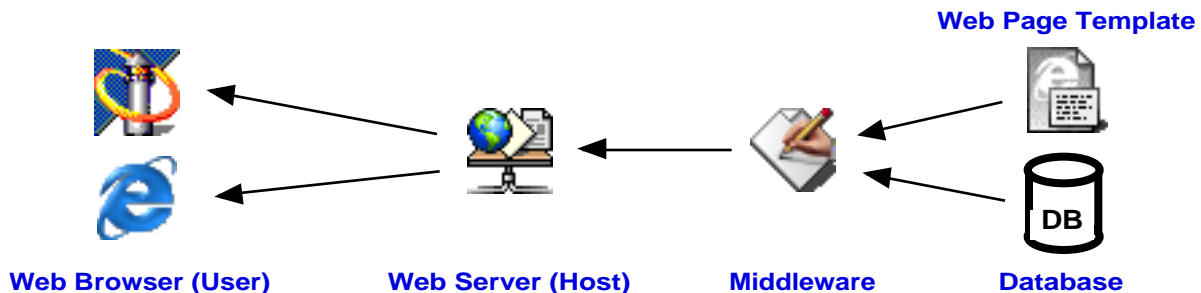
Internet Service Providers (ISP) are setup to host web pages in a similar way. This means that moving your web site from one ISP to another is a routine process. Hosting a standard web site looks like the following:



- 1) The user asks to view a web page from your web site.
- 2) The web server software at your web site receives the request and finds the page.
- 3) The page is then sent to the web browser of the person visiting your site, where it is viewed.

Dynamic Sites: How a Database Driven Web Site Works

Hosting a database driven site is more complex than hosting a web site. In fact, some ISPs don't even offer a database hosting option. There are two additional programs involved when integrating a database into a web site. The ISP's higher database hosting fees account for the additional needs. Here is how a database driven site works:



- 1) A person accesses your site and requests to view information that exists in your database.
- 2) The web server software at your web site hands the request to the middleware program.
- 3) The middleware program takes the information from your database.
- 4) The middleware program mixes the data with a web page template.
- 5) The middleware program gives the finished web page to the web server.
- 6) The page is then sent to the web browser of the person visiting your site, where it is viewed.

Why ISPs charge higher rates for database hosting:

Reason 1: Complexity - In order to host a database driven site, the ISP must purchase, maintain, and service additional software. It is complex because the software market offers several combinations of software that an ISP may use. The ISP decides what software it will support for database driven sites. Since the web page templates contain special programming that works specifically with the combination

of software programs at a particular ISP, moving your site to another ISP requires that their software and your templates are compatible.

Reason 2: More Things Can Go Wrong - With all the additional programs involved in a database driven web site, more things may go amiss. Here are some examples:

- The programming that is in the web page templates may cause an error that can shut down the middleware, the database, or the computer.
- Many ISPs have small limits on the amount of information that can be stored in the database, so you must monitor and comply with the storage space limitations.
- A system that is down can cause a loss of data. The information in the database needs to be backed up on a regular basis in order to minimize the amount of lost data.

Many ISPs don't address these types of problems as part of their standard service. The responsibility for maintaining the site may fall on you. Investigate the level of service an ISP will offer for their fee.

Arm Yourself: Ask these questions when considering hosting options

Issues	Questions for the ISP	Questions to Ask Yourself
Monitoring	Are all parts of the web site monitored (web server, middleware, and database)?	If the ISP monitors the site, but not the database programs, what is your action plan?
Business Risk (Lost Sales)	What is the service provider's response time to down systems?	If your database goes down, what is your cost/minute?
Technical Expertise	What kind of technical support do they offer for setup, maintenance, and troubleshooting?	Are you comfortable monitoring the web site & database programs, or do you want someone else to handle monitoring for you?
Web Site Usage	Is the software able to handle the expected demand?	What is your current and expected web site visitor volume?
Protected Data	Is data backed up daily? Is there an off-site backup at all times? What security measures exist?	What kind of data am I collecting and how does it need to be protected?
Special Needs	How flexible is their database system? Is there going to be an extra charge for each special need that you want?	Do you have special needs that go beyond collecting and displaying data (Documents are created, transferred, or accessed as part of the user experience) and does the ISP know of these needs?
Enhancements	Does the ISP offer programming help for minor enhancements to your web site?	Do you have someone who can make changes to your site on an as needed basis?
Costs	What is included in the monthly service fee? What services cost extra?	Does the service fee that you choose cover all of the options that are important to you in order to keep your site running to your standards?

If you need help in assessing your hosting options, we would be happy to be a resource for you. At Database by Design, Inc., we can create a database driven web site for your existing service provider, or we can host the site for you (a detailed listing of our hosting options can be found at <http://www.mycustomdatabase.com/hosting.html>). Contact us so we can help you build an engaging web site!

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Next Month's Topic: Work smarter, not harder - Do you spend too much time typing data into a system?