

SiteMaker Virtual Hosts

Overview

Virtual Hosts is a term coined to describe the ability of SiteMaker to allow sites to be accessed with an host name (Internet domain name) which is different than that normally used by SiteMaker. Virtual Hosts allows a single SiteMaker installation to respond to requests for multiple host names. Thus, various entities can share a SiteMaker installation while retaining a unique identity in terms of host name.

For example, consider a SiteMaker installation with sites referenced under a host named sitemaker.school.edu (this is referred to as the standard host name below). To maintain a unique identity, the engineering school could reference it's SiteMaker sites under a host name of sitemaker.engineer.school.edu (their SiteMaker Virtual Host). In this situation, a SiteMaker web site named **faculty** could be accessed through either of these URLs:

Standard SiteMaker Host: <http://sitemaker.school.edu/faculty>

Virtual SiteMaker Host: <http://sitemaker.engineer.school.edu/faculty>

Note that the engineering school would still need to use a different host name, for example www.engineer.school.edu, for any content not in SiteMaker.

When displaying the contents of a site, SiteMaker uses the host name the site is referenced with for all links on the nav bar and also for links to files uploaded to that site. This ensures that all links within a site maintain a consistent host name for all navigation within that site.

Restrictions and Limitations

1. The Virtual Host will only be in effect when the user navigates to a site by clicking on (or typing in) a URL containing that Virtual Host. If the site were accessed in another way (from the directory of sites for example), the standard SiteMaker host will be used. There will be no automatic switching from the standard to the Virtual Host.
2. The Virtual Host domain will only affect the links in the nav bar and links to files uploaded to that site. The footer links for the SiteMaker main page, Configure this Site, and Manage Files will all be under the regular SiteMaker host.
3. The Virtual Host will be treated as separate for the purpose of user authentication. If a user has already logged in and then moves from the standard SiteMaker host to a Virtual Host, when they attempt to access a protected section they will be required to log in again. The same holds true when moving from a Virtual Host back to the standard SiteMaker host.
4. The Virtual Host will be treated as separate for the purpose of maintaining a list of recently visited sites. Sites visited under a Virtual Host will not appear in this list.

5. The host name used must be specific to SiteMaker and cannot be used for other resources. SiteMaker must handle all requests to this domain. This means that in the case where a unit maintains a conventional web presence while also using SiteMaker, the domain name for the conventional site must be different from the host name used for SiteMaker. For example, the engineering school could have a conventional name of `www.engineer.school.edu` while using `sitemaker.engineer.school.edu` for the SiteMaker managed content.

Configuring Apache

Except under the specific conditions noted below, using a SiteMaker Virtual Host requires a `ServerAlias` directive to be added to the SiteMaker VirtualHost definitions in Apache's `httpd.conf` file. Each SiteMaker Virtual Host being used must be specified in a `ServerAlias` directive (though "wild card" host names are permitted).

See <http://httpd.apache.org/docs/vhosts/name-based.html> for details.

If the standard SiteMaker host is the first VirtualHost in the Apache `httpd.conf` file, or if the standard SiteMaker host is handled without using a VirtualHost, then no changes need to be made to support SiteMaker Virtual Hosts. Any domain name pointed at the server running Apache, and not matched by another Apache VirtualHost, will be used as a SiteMaker Virtual Host.