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Project 4 Maintenance Plan

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The primary cost to consider when maintaining our EECS social media website over a period of several months is clearly the cost of purchasing a hosting server on a monthly basis. These monthly web-hosting costs were previously examined in the deployment plan. We will revisit these costs throughout this essay with the overarching goal of ensuring the most effective hosting service is selected for long-term deployment. Another cost that is worth considering in this maintenance plan, due to the essence of maintaining a website over a long-term period, is that of hiring developers to maintain the website over several months. A website that is active over a long period of time is bound to encounter errors at some point in its life cycle. By hiring a staffed developer, we would be able to primarily free ourselves from maintenance issues, and in addition to this, ensure that the website remains useable over a long period of time. Since our product is especially designed for frequent public interaction, a glitch in the program would be a highly detrimental downfall to the website’s overall success.

We first visit the issue of obtaining a web-hosting server that is also addressed in the Deployment Plan. The chart below shows a comparison for the costs of web hosting from several leading sources. The listed prices are all minimum monthly prices for a plan under their service. Source: <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2424725,00.asp>

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Company: | InMotion | HostGator | DreamHost | Hostwinds | Bluehost |
| Price: | $3.49 | $3.33 | $4.95 | $4.50 | $3.49 |
| Unlimited Monthly Data Transfer | No | No | Yes | Yes | No |
| Dedicated Hosting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Company: | Liquid | GoDaddy | 1&1 | Media Temple | SiteGround |
| Price: | $14.95 | $3.99 | $4.99 | $20.00 | $9.95 |
| Unlimited Monthly Data Transfer | No | No | No | No | No |
| Dedicated Hosting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Observing the above data shows that DreamHost and Hostwinds are the prime candidates for a long-term hosting plan. Their low monthly cost of $4.95 and $4.50, respectively, provides a total hosting cost of $54 to $60 over a period of a year. For example, consider the cost of purchasing Media Temple’s hosting service, with a monthly fee of $20.00. The reason this price is so high is due to the fact that it adds unneeded functionality, at least for the scope of our project, regarding Wordpress. Since our website is made from scratch in a bottom-up HTML layout, Wordpress functionality is not a necessary feature for this project’s hosting. The cost of Media Temple over a yearlong period ends up being $240.00, which is at least $180.00 more than would be paid via hosting through DreamHost or Hostwinds. Thus, performing design without using a content management system such as Drupal or Wordpress can save considerable costs. DreamHost and Hostwinds are both strong choices regarding long-term price.

Not only their low price, but DreamHost and Hostwinds both offer unlimited monthly data transfer, which is a fundamental feature given the nature of the EECS forum website. Since the EECS forum website requires frequent interaction with the MySQL database, anything less that unlimited data transfer could cause some serious issues, especially in regards to the maintenance of the website if the user base grows substantially.

Finally, we see that DreamHost and Hostwinds both offer the customer dedicated servers, which simply means that the servers used to store the website and all its data are not shared by other customers, and we would be effectively leasing that dedicated server space for the duration of the contract. This is contrast to servers that offer shared hosting, which means that multiple websites must share the same server being leased. This could cause problems if website traffic grows unusually large on one of the websites, causing slow-downs across multiple websites.

When taking into consideration these three factors; that is, monthly price, unlimited data transfer, and dedicated hosting, we can conclude that a selected hosting option must adhere to all three criteria to be a successful option. This narrows down the search within these ten sites to DreamHost and Hostwinds.

We now consider costs for hiring a web developer to manage the website. The graph, which is shown below, displays the difference in price range between five different generalized types of web development companies. Source: <http://www.comentum.com/web-development-cost-rate-comparison.html>

Graph displaying comparison between the hourly rates for web development

The y-axis displays price in dollars and the x-axis displays type of company

Upon observing the above data, we see that the “Extravagant Class” of web development companies is out of the price range for the current scope of the project. This design choice would make the website effectively flawless, and there would surely be a stunning user interface that would attract the public. Although this route of design would also make the website highly professional, visually attractive, and highly accessible, the cost alone would not make it a plausible option. Regarding the “Moderate Class” of web development companies, we again encounter the same issue. The scope of this project is simply too small to require a web development company in the “Extravagant Class” range or the “Moderate Class” range.

Next, we see the “Small Class” of development companies. This category covers web development businesses consisting of 2-5 people and are typically run on a low budget. The quality of this service would clearly not be on as high of a level as the previously mentioned classes. However, the price range places the “Small Class” of companies in the reasonable range for this project’s scope. Even so, the price would have to be on the lower end of the price spectrum for it to be plausible.

Additionally, the option of an individual contractor is always a possibility. Since their price can drop even lower than companies within the “Small Class,” an individual contractor could provide site-wide maintenance over a long-term without the hassle of interacting with a company. Also, due to the size of the project, there should not be too many large issues that arise with the product over a given period of time, other than issues with database storage as the website user base grows.

Finally, we see data for template-based, low-cost, mass-developed website development. Since our site is fully designed and constructed, it is unlikely that this is the type of service we would desire. It is unlikely that an outsourced business such as this one could provide substantial help in regards to maintaining the website, but most are rather centered on initial design.

We have seen that options in web hosting and hired development make long-term maintenance of the website highly plausible and potentially inexpensive. The plausible options for web hosting, DreamHost and Hostwinds, should provide all of the functionality we need, even while the user base grows. Additionally, an individual contractor would be the ideal person to manage the website long-term, since price can potentially be low while the website is effectively maintained.