Evaluating DIY Hosting

The right questions can help you and your team cut through the noise. Here are the 7 questions to ask as you evaluate DIY hosting options:

1. How will we manage version control?

Why it matters: Version control gives you a safe and reliable way to make and reverse changes to your website while it's in development. Alternatively, you could edit your site directly via SFTP, but you risk overwriting and losing valuable work. If several developers are collaborating on one site, version control is a necessity.

2. How will we manage development and test environments, as well as live site deployments?

Why it matters: Separate development and testing environments provide a safe place to develop and try new site features without interfering with you live site. The alternative is to make changes directly to your live site, which usually leads to bugs and downtime. A safe deployment workflow is also key, ensuring painless site launches and feature releases.

3. Who will do the initial server configuration, set up the OS, web server, in-memory caching, edge caching & Apache Solr?

Why it matters: People get upset when pages load slowly or your site goes down under load. Hosting environments need to be set up properly, and caching systems configured to withstand traffic spikes.

4. Who will manage the server software, including security updates?

Why it matters: The systems running your Drupal site need to be maintained to keep up with security releases and the latest software versions. Failure to do this leads to hacked websites and exposed customer data. Some time should also be budgeted for ongoing server tuning, as your site's features and traffic levels will vary over time.

5. Who is the on-call escalation point for the server software?

Why it matters: What happens when you site goes down at 3am? If rebooting the server doesn't fix it, who does? Someone on your IT team needs to carry the pager and respond to incidents 24/7. This person needs to learn not only Drupal, but also the technologies necessary to support Drupal, including git, Varnish, Redis, and deployment best practices. Every time a security breach is found, an update must be installed immediately.

6. What's our plan to scale resources if we need to, and do we have high availability in place to ensure uptime?

Why it matters: You never know when a viral traffic spike will occur, flooding your site with millions of visitors. When that happens, one server won't be enough. Having a plan to scale up when you need to, keeps your time in the spotlight from being wasted on an error message.

7. How can backups be automated and stored offsite?

Why it matters: Hard drives on servers fail, causing catastrophic data loss. Your data must be automatically backed up offsite every day. Play the odds and run the risk of permanent data loss.

Budgeting for DIY Hosting vs Pantheon

Web infrastructure presents a number of hidden costs. Some costs are triggered by your hosting provider, while others come from vendors or your own internal management. Below is a simple budgeting guide for a complete Drupal infrastructure set-up, versus the costs of a site running on the Pantheon Platform.

Item	Hours (Minimum estimates for a typical website. Complex sites require additional hours.)	Cost w/ Traditional Hosting (Based on $125/hr rate for Drupal system admin)	Cost w/ Pantheon
Dev Server Setup	5 hrs	$625	Cost Included
Version Control	5 hrs	$625	Cost Included
Production Server Setup	10 hrs	$1,250	Cost Included
Safe Deployment Workflow	20 hrs	$2,500	Cost Included
Testing server setup & continuous integration	20 hrs	$2,500	Cost Included
Performance Tuning	20 hrs	$2,500	Cost Included
Cache Servers	20 hrs	$2,500	Cost Included
High Availability	100 hrs	$12,500	Cost Included
Total	200 hrs	$25,000	Free

One-Time Savings: $25,000 or more

Ongoing Monthly Cost to Manage DIY Hosting for a Typical Website

Item	Hours (Minimum estimates for a typical website. Complex sites require additional hours.)	Cost w/ Traditional Hosting (Based on $125/hr rate for Drupal system admin)	Cost w/ Pantheon
Ongoing Server & Software Maintenance	5 - 10 hrs	$625 - $1,250	Cost Included
Development Infrastructure		$500 - $2,000	Cost Included
Total Monthly (Not including monthly production hosting cost)		$1,125 - $3,250	Free

Monthly Savings: $1,125 - $3,250 or more