Your Complete Internet Fax Guide

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What Is Internet Fax?
(Quick Overview)

Internet fax is simply using the Internet and **your email** system to send and receive your faxes. Since it is web based, you can send your faxes anytime anywhere, as long as you have an Internet connection; and these days that's available just about everywhere.

You sign up with an Internet fax service provider to get your own fax number (**local or toll free**), which you use in the same manner as you would use any fax number. There is a small charge for this service but keep in mind you do not need an extra phone line to do Internet faxing since everything is computer based and done online.

Many small and large business owners are switching over to Internet fax for some **obvious advantages**:

- it is very convenient
- it is very fast
- it offers more privacy
- it is available wherever you have the Internet
- and many faxes can be sent/received simultaneously (no busy signals)

Plus, there are no messy fax machines and no need for a second phone line.

One of the **most** asked questions about Internet fax relates to the confusion over just how the whole thing works. Many traditional fax users can't quite get their heads around the idea of using/having faxes **without** the traditional fax machine.

Basically, you sign up with a fax service provider and get your own fax number and you send/receive your faxes thru your email system - your fax is attached to an email as either a TIFF, PDF, JPEG or another common file format. You can access your faxes from an **online interface** (your fax login site) where your faxes can be received and sent. You can also store your faxes online there.

Many online fax services also have Desktop Applications which you can place on your desktop or in your email carrier - when you need to send a fax, you just press this fax icon.

What confuses most people who are not familiar with online faxing is the question: can I **still** send my faxes to the old traditional machines, since many of my business partners may not be using Internet fax?

The answer is **YES!**

You can send your faxes to the old traditional fax machine; and if they have your fax number, they can still return a fax to you via the old traditional manner or fax machine.

Here's how Internet fax works:

You use a fax gateway or Internet fax provider/server to handle your faxes. For example, say if you were sending a fax:

Computer/Internet -> **Fax provider/server** -> **Phone line** -> **Fax machine**

You use your computer and the Internet to log into your online account/page to send your fax to your fax provider/server, which then uses the phone line to send your fax to the receiving fax machine. In many cases you can also use your email to send a fax.

If you are receiving a fax:

Fax machine -> **Phone line** -> **Fax provider/server** -> **Email message (thru Internet)** -> **Your Email account**

Someone uses a fax machine to send you a fax which goes thru the phone line to your fax provider/server which converts it into a TIFF or PDF file and sends you an email message with your fax attached in your email.

If both parties are using Internet fax, then your faxes can be sent/received using your email systems over the Internet.

Computer/email -> **Fax provider/server** -> **Computer/email**

What you really have to keep in mind, once you sign up for an Internet fax service you will have an online interface (login site) where you can send and receive your faxes. Then when you send or receive a fax, you get a confirmation in your web interface and/or by email.

This offers some great advantages such as receiving and sending your faxes whenever and wherever you access the Internet. No more busy signals, no more messy fax machines, no more nosy workers seeing the contents of your fax, and no extra phone line. Plus, many faxes can be sent/received simultaneously, even when your computer is turned off. No more missed faxes because your phone line was busy.

What Is Fax Broadcasting?

Another major advantage of Internet fax is Fax Broadcasting or sending out a fax to multiple numbers or clients. Because of the advanced technology behind Internet fax, sending out large volumes of faxes can be done quickly and easily. This has important implications for those doing online marketing and business - most services can be scaled up to meet your company's growing needs.

What are the major Online Fax Services?

However, in order to get all these advantages you have to sign up for an Internet fax service. There are many well-known Internet fax providers such as **MyFax, eFax®, RapidFax, TrustFax, RingCentral**... and some very good lesser-known faxing companies such as **MetroFax** out of Seattle and **Faxage** out of Denver.

How Much Does Internet Fax Cost?

A word of caution, when signing up for any long-term business service it pays to do your homework first. It pays to shop around mainly because even any small savings may prove significant over the long haul. Prices can range from very cheap (**under $20 a year**) to around **$10 - $15 a month**, depending on the kind of service you need. There are many different plans and services, and keep in mind, you will usually pay more for international faxing.

Internet fax seems to be the way of the future as more and more businesses go online. Besides, as we become more and more modernized, computers are offering us simple and convenient solutions to many of our daily traditional business tasks such as faxing. Can your business or any company for that matter, really afford **not** to take advantage of the benefits of Internet fax?

Can you still remain **competitive** without Internet fax?

It's your call?

1. Five Solid Reasons To Use An Internet Fax Service

Online or Internet Fax Services are becoming extremely popular with our ever increasingly mobile workplace and workforce. As we become more mobile, we want the ability to receive and send faxes through our email and the Internet. It's as simple as that!

Receive and send your faxes anywhere, anytime.

Plus, you have no more paper jams, no more bulky fax machines, no more busy signals and no more return trips to the office to retrieve that important fax at 10 o'clock at night!

If you need more convincing about the advantages of using or switching to an Internet Fax Service, here's a short list of reasons:

- **Convenience**

  There's a great deal of convenience to receiving and sending your faxes through your email. You can access it anywhere and anytime; wherever and whenever you access your computer and the Internet.

  Your faxes are right at your fingertips - just one click away.

  You receive a local or toll-free fax number that you can give out to all your contacts. You can also store all your faxes online or on your computer's hard-drive, so you know exactly where your faxes are. You know exactly where to find that important fax when you need it. No more scrambling through files or garbage bends to find your faxes. No more missed faxes because of busy signals, not to mention the decrease in all that foul language as there are no more paper jams.

- **Mobility**

  Perhaps, the most important feature or selling point for using an Internet or email fax service is mobility. Since you receive and send faxes through your email system and the Internet you can access them anywhere, anytime.

  This is great for mobile professionals, traveling sales people, real estate agents, onsite builders, etc. Our workplaces and workers are becoming very mobile at a very fast rate - just in the last five or ten years we have seen the explosion in the popularity of cell phones, PDAs, Wi-Fi, Wireless Broadband, and portable laptop computers. All these new technologies have changed how we do business and how we communicate.

  Internet or email fax **fits perfectly** into this mix and gives us the means to take our work on the road.

- **Easy To Use**

  Internet fax is as easy as using your email. How hard can that be? Most, if not all email fax providers have a Web Interface (online site) where you can log onto and do all your faxing chores. Send and receive faxes. Most fax services also allow you to store your faxes online for easy access.

  Most Internet fax services will work with Windows Outlook and Windows Office. Some have free desktop applications that you can download and place on your desktop which allows you to send and receive your faxes.

  Finally, most services let you send a fax by just sending an email, i.e. (destination number)@yourfaxservice.com - It doesn't get any easier than that.

- **Inexpensive**

  Internet fax can be very inexpensive, especially if you only have modest faxing needs. If you send or receive just a few faxes each month you can purchase a very inexpensive monthly or yearly plan from many of the major fax providers. Many of these Internet fax services have various plans and fees;

finding one that matches your faxing needs can save you a lot of money in the long run.

Really modest fax users can get an Internet fax service for a few dollars a month. One of the major service providers, eFax® will even let you have a Free account where you can receive up to 20 faxes a month for free, but be aware you will have to upgrade to a paid service to send faxes.

For a person starting a home business or office, using an online fax service will save you the extra cost of purchasing a fax machine and an extra phone line. Actually, online faxing may save your company or organization around 85% on up front costs and 34% on monthly costs of traditional fax servers. This is a great plus.

Most online fax services are business-ready, and are completely flexible and scalable to meet all your company's faxing requirements. Fax broadcasting to a large number of recipients can also be more cost-effective with these online services. There's usually special custom pricing for companies.

- **Compatibility**

Lastly, in a world that's constantly changing, having a faxing system that's compatible to all the latest gadgets and gizmos, is more important than it may seem at first glance. As our communication and business tools keep changing with the introduction of new hardware and services, Internet or email fax will work with all of these new inventions: Laptops, PDAs, Cell Phones, Wi-Fi, VoIP, Wireless Broadband, Satellite Internet, come what may...

Choosing an Internet fax service will meet all your present and future personal and business faxing needs. It is the right choice at the right time. Discover the advantages of an email fax service for yourself. Easy to use, affordable, mobile, accessible and of course, compatible.

2. Internet Fax FAQs - What you need to know...

Here are the most **frequently asked questions** about Internet Fax:

A - What Is Online or Internet Faxing?

Internet or email fax is simply using your email system and the Internet to receive and send your faxes. Anywhere. Anytime.

Your faxes are sent as email attachments, usually in a TIFF, PDF, JPEG or GIF format.

Major Plus - instead of a fax machine and an extra phone line; you use your email and an Internet Fax Service Provider. Of course, most of these fax providers will charge you a fee for their services. Also keep in mind, all these fax services have different plans and rates - so it pays to shop around and find the one best suited to fulfill your faxing needs.

B - How Do I Send A Fax From My Computer?

Actually there are several ways to a fax from your computer - basically you can "Do It Yourself" (DIY) since most if not all computer modems comes with a fax function or can be used as a fax modem.

Your fax modem will fit into an internal PC slot which then connects to your telephone line thru a regular telephone cable. You will need fax software (such as HotFax Message Center or WinFax Pro) to let you enter a destination fax number and to manage your faxes, etc.

Keep in mind, using the same fax system above you can set-up a "network fax server" to let all network users send faxes as in an office environment. You will need extra software such as Captaris RightFax or ACCPAC FaxServe to do this.

Second, perhaps the easier way is to sign-up for to Internet Fax Service Provider since you don't need to install any hardware or software.

This Fax Service Provider will give you your own fax number (local or toll-free) so that you can receive and send faxes thru your email system.

You will also get an online interface or site where can store and track your faxes. You will also be able to send and receive faxes from your online fax site.

Faxes are usually received as email attachments in TIF, PDF, JPEG... and other formats. Some fax providers let you send your faxes as email links - where the receiver has to confirm receipt and show they have opened the link or seen the fax. A confirmation email is send back to the sender.

C - How Do I Receive A Fax On My Computer?

If you have installed and you're using a fax modem and fax software on your computer you can receive faxes. Faxes are received thru a telephone line to your fax modem.

If you're using an Internet Fax Service Provider there is no need for the hardware or the software. You sign up for a subscription and get your own fax number. You receive your faxes as email attachments, usually in TIF, PDF or a JPG format.

You may need a fax viewer software in order to read your faxes, although recent versions of Windows have a built-in fax reader. This Window's Fax Editor will also let you edit a fax, as well as let you switch between different fax pages. You can also zoom in and out.

D - How Does An eMail Fax Work?

Internet Fax works by using email. You receive and send faxes by using your email system and the Internet.

First, you must set up a local or toll-free number with one of the Internet Fax Service Providers. You use this fax number to receive and send faxes via email as attachments.

Most, if not all, Internet Fax services will let you use a Web Interface (online site) to do your faxing. Or you can use an email program like Windows Outlook. Many Internet Fax Providers also give you a free desktop application download that you can place on your desktop to send and receive faxes. Most will work with Windows Office Documents.

You can access your faxes wherever you have the Internet, this is great for busy mobile professionals, onsite workers, business travelers or just the ordinary person on vacation.

E - How Do I Read An Inbound Fax?

Incoming or inbound faxes are delivered to you as an email, with the fax as a file attachment. This file attachment will usually be a TIF format file, or it can be PDF, JPG or other formats.

To view these File Attachments or faxes you will need a viewer. Most computers have an Adobe Acrobat Reader which will read PDF files. Also, you should note, Windows has a built-in viewer, with the latest version of Windows just double-clicking the file attachment will automatically pop-up the Windows Fax Viewer. Then you can then zoom in and out, move between the fax pages...

Please note - most recommend that you **NOT** use any Graphics program like Paint Shop Pro to read faxes.

F - Will Email Fax Work With My ISP?

Yes, provided you have set up an account with one of the external fax service providers listed in this guide or others. These fax services are well suited to work with DSL, ADSL and ISDN Internet Cable Broadband Connections.

G - Is Fax To Email Private?

No and Yes!

While many Internet Fax Providers use SSL and PGP encryption when sending your faxes and most email service providers are compliant with privacy regulations as Gramm-Leach-Bliley & HIPAA in the United States and PIPEDA in Canada - you are still using email and the Internet to send your faxes.

While encryption does insure safe transmission, many fax services **will store** your faxes online in their systems for a period of time - your faxes will be as safe or as private as your Provider's security measures.

Therefore, it is a good idea, if you're worried about sensitive faxes - to delete these from any online storage system ASAP. Keep in mind, any online site, no matter how secure may be hacked - including governments and banks, as you frequently read about.

If you're careful and take the right steps, email faxing can be relatively safe. But you should also ask yourself, how safe or private are ordinary phone lines if you're faxing old school?

Finally, if security is a real concern, you must ask whether or not your fax provider can send encrypted/signed emails? Encryption ensures only you and the receiver sees your faxes. Many top brand companies do offer this encryption service so you can make sure all your faxes are emailed in an encrypted format.

H - How Are My Faxes Tracked?

Usually, your fax service provider will have a couple of ways of notifying you about the success or failure of your fax. They will send you an email or you can log into your Internet fax account and track the status of your fax.

Many providers will also report to you the cost of each
fax you send.

I - What Is Fax Broadcasting?

Fax broadcasting is sending a fax out to a large group
of recipients at one time. Most Internet Fax providers
offer this service, especially to businesses or organizations
that have to send a document to a large group of contacts,
such as in Company Newsletters and Press Releases.

You can also use your email contact list to send a Fax Broadcast.

J - What is a "Junk Fax?"

Similar to spam - it is any unwanted communications or
material transmitted via fax - advertising goods, products,
or services without the receiver's prior expressed permission
to receive such faxes. One of the best resources to stop
unwanted or junk faxes is:

http://www.junkfax.org

K - Is there a "No Fax List?"

There is no one "Master List" but you can add your fax number
to certain lists that will cut your unwanted faxes considerably.
Keep in mind, any legitimate Internet Fax Provider will remove
or block your fax number from any unwanted lists or unwanted faxes.

So as well as removing your fax number from a particular merchant,
also request the Fax Service Provider associated with the unwanted
fax sender to remove or block your fax number.

This link will help:

http://www.junkfax.org/fax/action/stop.html

L - What File Types Can Be Used For Faxes?

The most common Internet Fax format or extension is
TIFF (Tagged Image File) format but other popular ones
are Acrobat PDF, JPEG/JPG and GIF.

However the list of fax formats that can be converted
for faxing is quite large - you should always check with
your own Internet Fax Service Provider to see which formats
they use for faxing or which can be converted for faxing.

For example, here's a list of formats or file extensions
that can be converted for faxing:

This list is courtesy of TrustFax:

Adobe Acrobat version 1.0 - 6.0, PDF
Adobe Framemaker version 6, MIF
Adobe Photoshop version 4, PSD
ASCII Text, ASC
Bitmap, BMP

Corel Draw version 6.0 - 8.0, CDR
Corel/Novell Quattro Pro version 1.0 - 10
Corel/Novell Word Perfect version 1.0 - 10, WPD
GEM Paint, IMG
Graphics Interchange Format, GIF
Hpertext Markup Language, HTM HTML
IBM Picture Interchange Format version 1, PIF
Joint Photographic Experts, JPG JPEG JPE
Kodak Flash PIX, FPX
Kodak Photo CD version 1.0, PCD
Lotus 1-2-3 version 1.0 - 5.0, WK1 WK3 WK4 WKS
MacPaint, PNTG
Micrografx Designer version 1.0 - 3.1
Micrografx Designer version 6, DRW
Micrografx Draw Draw version 1.0 - 4.0, DRW
Microsoft Access version 1.0 - 2.0
Microsoft Binder version 7.0 - 97, OBD
Microsoft Excel Charts version 2.x - 7.0, XLS XLC XLT XLW
(verify the converted file prior to faxing to ensure that
Excel page breaks don't make additional fax pages)
Microsoft Excel version 2.2 - 2003, XLS
Microsoft Outlook Message, text only MSG
Microsoft PowerPoint version 3.0 - 2003, PPT PPS
Microsoft Project version 98 text only
Microsoft Rich Text Format, RFT
Microsoft Word, DOC
Microsoft Works for Windows version 1.0 - 40, WPS
Paint Shop Pro Win32 only version 5.0 - 6.0, PSP
PC Paintbrush, PCX
Portable BitMap, PBM
Portable Grayscale, PGM
Portable Network Graphics version 1, PNG
Postscript Level II, PS
Tagged Image File version 1.0 - 6, TIF TIFF
Text Mail, MIME
Visio version 5, VSD
Windows Enhanced Metafile, EMF
Windows Metafile, WMF
WordPerfect Graphics version 1.0 - 2.0, WPG
WordStar 2000 version 1.0 - 3.0, DOC

M - Can You Send Legal Size faxes?

Yes, most online fax services allow you to send legal size
documents. Most will retain the original size of your
document - this is usually done automatically - both to
detect the size and keep it the same.

N - Can I Use a Cover Sheet?

Yes, you can send a fax with or without a coversheet.

Most companies will allow you to add your own custom
Cover page and let you modify your CSID - this is
the caller ID on the fax page.

In most cases you create a standard coversheet with
all your information and contact details which is keep
on file in your online fax account. If you want to send a
lone fax just click the ""Send without coversheet" box
or button. Again, just check with your own fax service
provider to find out the precise procedure for creating
your coversheet.

O - Can I add my digital signature to faxes?

Yes, your digitized signature can be saved as an image
and this image can be applied to your document or fax.
Most providers have this feature in their control panels
and you can send out your fax with your signature added.

P - How Do You Send an Email to Fax?

In most cases, in order to send a fax thru
your email you simply enter the fax number
you want dialed as a prefix in an email to
your Fax Provider account - i.e. recipient's
phone number@yourfaxcompany.com.

For example, 1234567890@yourfaxcompany.com
will deliver a fax to the number 1234567890.

Q - Helpful Internet Fax Forums:

http://www.faxbeep.com

http://forum.interfax.net

http://forums.comodo.com

R - Internet Fax Service Providers:

Here's a list of some Internet Fax Service Providers

Myfax	Metrohispeed	Faxage	eFax®	TrustFax
Venali	Send2fax	Clickfax	Interfax	Xifax
MaxEmail	Rapidfax	Callwave	Faxaway	Ringcentral
Fax2mail	Onebox	Ureach	Ozefax	Concordfax
MaxEmail	Telus	ClickFax	GreenFax	AirComUSA
SmartFax	ExtremeFax	Zipfax	FaxFreedom	Data On Call

If you want a handy Comparison Chart of the different prices and plans
offered by some of these Internet Fax Service Providers....
just click this link:

Internet Fax Comparison Chart

If you want to see some Fax Reviews... just click this link:

Internet Fax Reviews

S - How Much Does Internet Fax Cost?

Perhaps the most important questions you have to ask concerns the cost or price of your online faxing. Is there a set-up cost? Some companies do charge a small set-up fee; most don't.

The individual fax companies all have different plans and fees... so it pays to shop around... most services go for around **$10-$15 a month**. Heavier volume faxing will be more expensive. A yearly subscription can be bought for around $20 - $30 a year from certain providers.

You must always check to see how many faxes you can send and/or receive each month with your particular subscription? Each company is different and keep in mind, you will be charged more for international faxes.

Remember, as **general rule** of thumb, page calculations are done based on fax time. With the 60 second per page limit as standard. Most faxes are less than 40 seconds, but faxes with large graphics can be counted as two or more pages. Some fax providers base their fax rates on a per/minute fee... at 5 cents a minute.

In figuring out the costs of Internet faxing you also have to keep in mind, with online faxing you don't have the cost of a fax machine, nor the cost of a second phone line. Plus, you don't have ink, toner and paper costs.

Overall, Internet Faxing is a very viable alternative to the old fax machine. It offers some very distinct advantages because it is completely mobile, you can send your faxes anytime, anywhere. And since it is computer and Internet based it can be much more efficient than the old fax machine.

T - Are Any Free Online Faxing Services Really Free?

Internet fax or email fax services are becoming extremely popular among small business owners, large companies and even among the ordinary Internet user. Everyone seems to be discovering the advantages of using Internet fax.

You can fax anywhere, anytime. You can send and receive your faxes where ever you access the Internet. And these days that's just about anywhere and everywhere on the planet.

But Are There Really Any Free Fax Services?

Yes and No!

There are some Internet Fax services like eFax® which has a free faxing service but it is only free for receiving faxes -- you will have to upgrade to a paid service in order to send faxes. Granted, each fax you send will only cost a few cents but this will quickly add up, especially if you send international faxes which have higher rates than domestic ones. So please be aware of this fact, free if you only receive faxes, not free if you want to send faxes.

Free Fax Trials

Many online faxing providers do have or offer a free trial (usually one month) of their services. One such faxing service provider that offers a free trial is TrustFax. Offering a free trial is a common business practice used by many services; try before you buy.

A free trial period or trial run can be a very good way to check out your faxing provider. You can check out the quality of your faxes and see for yourself what kind of

support a provider has; how well do they respond to any problems that you may encounter? Can you reach them 24/7?

With a business service like faxing, superior performance and quality service is required for the smooth running of your business. A free trial is one way of assuring you only get the best Internet fax service possible.

Toll Free Fax Numbers

Many Internet fax providers also offer Toll Free Fax Numbers to their patrons or clients. Check before you sign up for any one faxing service and find out what kind of phone numbers they provide. Most offer local phone numbers and 'never busy' numbers.

Free Online Storage

Some email fax providers offer online storage where you can store your faxes. Usually around 15 MB to 20 MB, but this is another feature you should always check out before you sign up to any one faxing service provider. Depending on the nature of your faxes, it is never a good idea to leave vital information on the web -- delete your faxes regularly if they're of a sensitive nature.

Before You Sign On The Dotted Line

Very few things in life are really free! This includes your Internet fax service -- check out any free offer or service very closely before you sign on the dotted line. Make sure you know exactly what that free fax service is going to cost you?

3. Quick History of the Internet Fax

It has been said that the means of sending messages from one location to another stated with smoke and drum signals.

The father or inventor of the facsimile or fax machine is a Scottish inventor named Alexander Bain - he was granted a patent way back in 1843. Although this was a forerunner of today's fax machines - the concept or idea still forms the basis of our fax machines. He used electric clock pendulums to create a back-and-forth line scanning mechanism.

In 1861, Giovanni Caseli made the first fax machine called the Pantelegraph.

RCA in 1924 (Richard H. Ranger) invented a wireless facsimile using radio. The first transoceanic radio fax was a picture of President Calvin Coolidge sent to London from New York on Nov. 29th, 1924.

In 1929, another way for facsimile transmission was invented by Rudolf Hell, called the Hellschreiber.

In 1985, the first computer fax board was created by Dr. Hank Magnuski (GammaLink), it was called the GammaFax.

Email Fax

On June 24, 1997 - PSINet, the first commercial ISP introduced InternetPaper(SM) a service that sent documents from your desktop PC to any fax machine on the planet through the Internet.

And the rest, as they say, is History!

4. Going Green with Internet Fax

Unless you're already living a mile underground, you will have probably noticed our planet is in trouble. Serious trouble.

With global warming, climate change, melting polar ice caps, severe weather conditions... the truth, convenient or otherwise, is as evident as your next weather forecast. And the outlook is not looking too bright for this planet and everyone living on it.

As different countries struggle to get their act together to help solve this very serious problem, environmentally savvy individuals and companies are doing their part to ease this crisis. For even small changes in individual behavior or actions can add up to a big difference, especially as greater numbers of people take the whole issue of climate change more seriously.

One such area of action is Internet fax. It has proven to be an environmentally friendly way of faxing, mainly because Internet or online faxing is **paperless**. Just as email has saved valuable resources, so too does Internet fax.

According to Energy Star, a U.S. environmental protection agency, copiers and fax machines are the most energy-intensive types of business equipment because they are paper-intensive and are left on 24 hours a day. Keep in mind, paper production in terms of energy used is second only to petroleum, so using less paper products can only be seen as a good practice.

Internet fax is using the web and your email system to do your faxing; and because you send and receive your faxes as email attachments, it is paperless. In addition, you don't need an old-fashion fax machine and there's no need for a second phone line. All these factors make Internet fax an obvious choice for those conscious of needlessly wasting valuable resources in their business routines.

Using Internet fax is one way of going green. Many individuals and companies are now using Internet fax for this reason. Granted, this may be a secondary reason as most opt for Internet fax because it is much simpler and easier to use than regular faxing. It is also very convenient to have access to your faxes anywhere and anytime. You are no longer tied to your old fax machine.

MyFax is one fax service provider who is actively promoting the green angle in their marketing. It may prove to be a very smart marketing move as more potential customers become environmentally savvy and switch their future purchases to more "green" choices.

In order to take advantage of these "green" benefits you have to start using Internet fax. First you have to sign up to an Internet fax service provider who will give you your own toll-free or local fax number. You also get an online interface (site) where you can send and receive your faxes. You can also store your faxes online.

There is a small service charge for these faxing services that can be a very modest ($20 a year) to around $10 a month - depending on your faxing needs. Keep in mind, international faxing rates will be more expensive.

Regardless of which service you choose, using Internet fax is one way you can go green. It might seem like a small act but every little step in the right direction counts when you're conserving valuable resources.

So why not go green with Internet fax? You will not only discover an easier and more convenient way to fax, but you may just help save the planet in the process. Now how cool is that?

5. Internet Fax Buying Guide

What You Need To Know?

Before signing up for any Internet fax service provider there are some very **important questions** you should ask or have the answers to before you sign on the dotted line. Keep in mind, acquiring a fax number and service for your business or company should have your full attention because this is usually a long-term service and doing your homework now can **save** you significant money over the long haul.

More importantly, choosing the right fax service provider can save you from some serious problems and headaches down the road. Like any business service, you must make sure you get a **reliable** service with good support that is reachable at all hours of the day or night, a quality service that will enhance your business and not hinder it.

With this in mind, here are some basic questions you should be asking about the Internet fax service provider you're considering using.

Questions on the Company, Service and Support:

Who owns the company? How long have they been operating? What is their client base or how many customers do they have? How good is their support?

Basically, you want to do some research on the Internet fax company you're thinking about using. Check out the company's history by doing a BBB search to see if there are any major **complaints** about the company or service.

Find out how long they have been operating and find out what their support is like. One good source of information on the different companies is online fax forums. Check these to see what the support is like for a company and/or if there are any problems with using a particular fax company.

Many fax service providers have their own forums... go in and check how well questions are answered and **how quickly** problems are solved. You can even monitor these forums over a few days just to see how quickly problems are solved and how quickly troubleshooting issues are dealt with.

Check and ask around to see if you can find actual users and customers of a particular fax service. There is nothing as good as first-hand experience and advice when choosing a service. Get their honest opinions and ratings of your chosen fax service provider.

Check to see if there's a trial period and if there is a 30-day money-back **guarantee** if things don't work out. Most legitimate fax companies provide this feature.

Questions on your New Fax Number:

Check to see what type of fax number is supplied by the fax provider - local number with your same area code? Toll-free number? Can you get inbound numbers in a different country in case you want to create a virtual presence there?

Does the fax provider **recycle** old fax numbers? On rare occasions that could present a problem with you receiving someone else's faxes. Keep this in mind if you discontinue your fax number, especially if you were receiving sensitive faxes thru your number.

Questions on the Transmission of Faxes:

How do I send faxes? How do I use the "email to fax" - the exact procedure for your chosen fax provider? Is there a desktop or email application I can use to send and receive faxes? Some fax providers have desktop or email applications where you simply click a fax icon to send your faxes.

Is there an **online interface** or site where I can send and receive my faxes? Can I store my faxes online? If so, how much disc space is provided? Can I track the process of my faxes online?

What attachment file formats are used by your prospective fax provider? Most use the TIFF (Tagged Image File) format but other popular ones are Acrobat PDF, JPEG/JPG and GIF.

If you have or use a different format, check with the provider to see if they can handle it. Sometimes, a fax provider will receive faxes in many different formats but you can only send faxes in certain formats - check with the provider first before you sign up for their service.

Can you change your email address to where your faxes are sent? Can you have multiple email addresses? Do you have control over your fax identifier (CSID) for outbound faxes? The **CSID** is used to identify the sender of the fax and is a legal requirement in many locations.

Finally, if security is a real concern, you must ask whether or not your fax provider can send encrypted/signed email? **Encryption** ensures only you and the receiver sees your faxes. Many top brand companies do offer this encryption system so you can make sure all your faxes are emailed in an encrypted format.

Questions on Fax Broadcasting:

Does your fax provider offer Fax Broadcasting - sending the same fax to hundreds or thousands of recipients? This is useful in a business setting for such things as Newsletters, Press Releases, Special Sales or Deals.

Along those same lines, you should consider if your fax provider is completely **scalable** to meet your company's growing faxing needs? Can you easily get multiple fax numbers for different departments or agents? Can it handle high volumes on short notice?

Questions on the Costs of Faxing:

Perhaps the most important questions you have to ask concerns the cost or price of your online faxing. Is there a **set-up cost**? Are there any hidden fees? Is there a trial version you can start with? Is there a money-back guarantee if you're not satisfied with the service?

Is the fax service a yearly subscription? Is it a monthly subscription? How many faxes can you send and/or receive each month with your monthly subscription? The individual fax companies all have **different** plans and fees... so it pays to shop around... most services go for around $10-$15 a month. Heavier volume faxing will be more expensive.

If I go over my limit, what are the costs of sending faxes? Receiving faxes? What are your provider's international fax rates? You will usually pay more for these types of faxes.

Remember, as general rule of thumb, page calculations are done based on fax time with the 60-second per page limit as standard. Most faxes are less than 40 seconds, but faxes with large graphics may be counted as two or more pages. Some fax providers base their fax rates on a per/minute fee... 5 cents a minute.

In figuring out the costs of your Internet faxing, you also have to remember, with online faxing you won't have the cost of a fax machine, or the cost of a second phone line. And lastly, you won't have to pay ink, toner and paper costs.

Overall, Internet faxing is a very **viable alternative** to the old fax machine. It offers some very distinct advantages because it is completely mobile, you can send your faxes anytime, anywhere. And since it is computer and Internet based, it can be much more efficient than the old fax machine.

6. Which Internet Fax Service Is Right For You?

Internet or e-mail fax services are becoming very popular with the computer savvy public. The ability to receive and send faxes whenever and wherever you access you e-mail has proven too irresistible for many fax users to ignore.

It's an offer they couldn't refuse. Can you blame them?

No more paper-jams, no more bulky fax machines, no more messy inks, no more busy signals, no more extra phone lines, no more return trips to the office at 10 o'clock at night to retrieve that important fax.

Internet fax is easy, mobile, convenient, accessible and very compatible with most of today's and tomorrow's computer gizmos and gadgets. From cell phones to BlackBerries to ultra-portable notebook computers, e-mail fax services will work with all of these contraptions.

Besides, almost every aspect of doing business in our brick and mortar world has been transferred onto the Internet. Faxing services are no different. However, using an Internet fax service has some distinct advantages over the old fashion fax machine/service; mainly the ability to access your faxes anywhere, anytime. This mobility is a big plus for both mobile professionals and ordinary fax users. Being completely connected in a wired world can give any business or company a competitive edge.

But there are so many Internet Fax services to choose from, each with its own features and pricing structures, so just which Internet fax service is right for you?

The answer will mainly depend on your own faxing needs or requirements. How much faxing do you plan to do? What types of faxing services do you need? Will you be only receiving faxes? Will you be only sending faxes? Will you need both functions? Will you need a fax broadcasting service?

Perhaps, the first question you have to ask yourself? Do you **need** Internet fax at all? Some people like to keep their businesses 9 to 5, weekdays only, please don't bother me after working hours or on the weekend. If you want your faxing strictly confined to your office, during office hours on your old fax machine, then Internet fax is probably not for you!

On the other hand, if you want your business or company to be able to receive and send faxes 24/7 - 365 days of the year, then you should check out the different Internet faxing services.

There are many Internet fax services available to the consumer. Some of the better known ones are MyFax, eFax®, Send2Fax and TrustFax. All these e-mail fax services have different plans and features. They also have different rates and fees, so it pays to shop around and check out each before you sign-up to any one fax provider.

Each Fax Service provider has **slightly** different ways of sending and receiving faxes. They all use e-mail and the Internet. Some have a free desktop application download that sits on your desktop. Most can be used with Windows Outlook and Windows Office. Most or all have a Web Interface, online web site where you can access your Internet fax account to send or check your faxes. Most also provide storage space if you wish to keep your faxes online.

Almost all are completely flexible and scalable to meet all corporate faxing requirements. They can be customized to any size organization or business. Fax broadcasting, where you send a fax to a large numbers of recipients is offered by most online fax services including the ones mentioned here.

And obviously, all supply you with a local or toll-free fax Number.

To find out more about how Internet Fax services work, why not read this very detailed interview Faxage Co-Founder, Christian Watts, did with OnlineFaxGuide.com FAXAGE Interview.

What Internet Fax service is right for you depends mainly on your own personal needs. Are your faxing needs very **minimum** or do you do a lot of faxing? The answer will usually determine which faxing service you go with. Of course, you must also check out customer support, service reliability and the overall quality of the fax service you are signing up for. But you knew that!

If you just want to ONLY receive faxes, eFax® will provide you with a free account where you can receive up to 20 free faxes a month. But be warned, you will have to upgrade to a paid service if you want to send faxes. The charge is minimal but they can quickly add up, so keep a close check on how many faxes you send each month. You should also be aware that each of these services charges higher rates to send international faxes; domestic faxes are cheaper.

Then again you have TrustFax has a Power User plan for $19.95 per YEAR with 70 Free Fax Pages (Incoming AND Outgoing) and 15 MB online storage for your faxes.

If your faxing needs are a little heavier you could try MyFax, it has great customer support and is only $10 a month which includes 100 sent and 200 received faxes. No setup fees, no hidden charges and it also informs you how much each of your faxes cost.

Which one should you choose?

It's always a good idea to try before you buy. Many of these Internet fax services have free one month trials. Some services such as MyFax and TrustFax have online demos which you can use to see what your faxes will look like. You can Test Drive their faxing systems before you buy.

If you check online, MyFax has garnered top customer or user ratings in many online fax forums and sites. It provides good quality service for a very reasonable price. Not to be outdone, eFax® is extremely popular with over 11,000,000 users and that must count for something. TrustFax and Send2Fax also come highly rated.

There are many more Internet faxing services on the web. You will have plenty of other services to choose from. Just make sure you have an Internet fax service that meets all your faxing needs and you won't be disappointed. Whether you're running a small home office or a large multi-national company, there's probably an online faxing service that will meet your needs.

But make up your **Own** Mind!

7. Using Internet Fax Comparison Charts To Find The Best Fax Service

Using comparison charts is a time tested method of quickly finding the best deal for any product or service you wish to buy. Whether you're looking for the latest large screen TV or the cheapest Internet fax service, comparison charts will quickly give you the necessary information you need to make an informed decision.

The main reason shoppers use comparison charts is time. You can save time by accessing all relevant data (prices, sizes, ratings, customer support, merchants, etc.) you need to make an informed decision. Comparison charts will give you all this vital information at a glance.

When choosing a business service such as Internet fax we have to be especially careful before we make our decision. Whenever we are buying any service we have to be extremely prudent. How reliable is the service? How good is the customer support if we should have problems? Are there any hidden fees which will rob us blind? Is the service completely scalable for any company or business which suddenly expands?

Buying a service like Internet fax does require that you do a little homework first. Especially when you consider this is an ongoing business expense which you will have to pay for each month. Wise decisions now could save you a lot of money over the long haul. Almost everyone now realizes Internet fax is very cost effective: no extra phone lines, no bulky fax machines, no messy ink and paper jams, no busy signals... you can receive and send your faxes wherever you have the Internet. And in our increasingly wireless world that's just about everywhere. There are many factors to consider when choosing an Internet fax service.

Here's a few that should be at the top of your list.

- **1. Service**

  First and foremost, you must get a quality service, one which has proven itself in the marketplace. In this day and age, the Internet itself is a good place to check customer ratings or recommendations of the different services. Never dismiss word of mouth recommendations - what fax service are your colleagues or business partners using and recommending. Check out any Internet fax service thoroughly before you sign up. Check with the BBB Better Business Bureau to see if there have been any complaints.

- **2. Price**

  Next you must check out the prices or costs very closely. What are the monthly charges? What are the monthly allowance of faxes you can have - how many inbound? how many outbound? Number of faxes can range from a 100 to 1000 pages so check closely. How much do extra pages cost? These can range from 3 cents to 10 cents per page. How much does international faxes cost? Are there set-up fees? Are there extra monthly charges for a Toll Free number?

  If you're a large company or someone with an active small business these costs can add up very quickly. Some fax comparison shopping now can save you money over the long haul.

- **3. Availability**

  Does the Internet service have an online interface or login site where you send and receive your faxes? Is there online storage, if so, how much? Can you use the service on any desktop applications? Which ones? Are there local fax numbers? Are there Toll Free numbers?

- **4. Support**

  Perhaps, the main question you should ask: how good is customer support? Will they offer help when you need it? Will the company go out of its way to assist you if any problems should arise? Current users of a fax service is usually a good judge of this so check Microsoft Marketplace under Internet fax and you will see customer rankings of the different services.

- **Smaller Can Be Better!**

  Many companies, managers or ordinary personal fax users tend to choose or go with major Internet fax companies, but these large Fax companies are not your only choices. Smaller lessen known fax companies such as MetroFax and Faxage offers great service at a much better price. Because their client base may be smaller than these larger companies, individual attention may be more attainable! Don't dismiss these fax companies from your list when you're considering a fax service for yourself or your company. The best things sometimes come in small packages.

  Regardless of which Internet fax provider you choose, make sure you're getting one that fits your needs. Make sure you're getting a quality, reliable service at the best price possible. Use

all the points listed above to help you find the right Internet fax service for you or your company. Choose wisely.

We hope this Fax Guide has given you some much needed information on Internet Fax and has answered most of your questions on this interesting service. For more information just follow the link below. If you found this fax guide helpful, why not pass it along to your Friends and Colleagues.

Here's a handy online Comparison Chart that's updated regularly:

- Internet Fax Comparison Chart