
Top 3 Choices for Internet File Sharing Service Providers

Research Report and Recommendations

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The Top 3 Providers

Xdrive Inc.

1630 Stewart Street
Suite 140
Santa Monica, CA 90404

<http://www.xdrive.com>

Of the 3 selected, this one has been around the longest. Their primary marketing focus is file backup and recovery solutions for mobile users. The file distribution capability is a side benefit that also sells the service. Additional features include automated backup capability, a command line option, and desktop application that allows you to virtually map a drive letter in Windows Explorer to represent your web space. This enables “drag and drop” functionality from within Windows XP or 2000.

There are forums (<http://xdrive.ipbhost.com/index.php>) on the Xdrive website where users can post questions and complaints. An excerpt from one Xdrive staff member seems to sum up the company position on file sharing: “Our goal has never been to be just another web hosting service. We want people to be able to create groups, share their digital life, grant permissions, and collaborate on the same files. Our sharing is built with the idea that lots of people can work together in the same space online. Not just post and receive.” – Lars #132, Xdrive Staff.

RETRIEVING DOWNLOADS:



With Xdrive, clients can retrieve files from you in one of two ways:

1. **Click on an email link you send them** - The first five recipients can download without having an Xdrive account of their own. The sixth recipient and onward will be required to setup a Free Space account (limited to 50MB) to access your files. Subsequently, all your recipients will be asked to copy files directly into their own personal Xdrive account. Recipients will not be required to enter credit card information to sign up, but if the download exceeds 50MB, they must upgrade to a paid account.
2. **Log in.** - You can invite clients to login and access your files, but clients will still be prompted to sign up for a free Xdrive account as above.

PROS:



1. Xdrive heavily invested in IT infrastructure and data center resources. Data security, redundant systems, and high availability are all strong points.
2. Xdrive interface is full featured, highly configurable, more than adequate.

CONS:



1. Client hassle factor is high. Downloading files may require clients to register for accounts of their own with Xdrive in order to continue receiving your files.
2. Java Virtual Machine® must be installed. While this free download is commonly found on many computers for support of various applets, it could present an obstacle for clients with older PC's running low on resources.
3. Requires Java Script to be enabled on web browsers (security concern).
4. Requires pop-up blocking to be disabled, or exception made for Xdrive.com.
5. Xdrive pricing was the highest per MB of all 3 providers.
6. "Free Trial" requires a credit card which they will charge to after 15 days.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT:



24/7 e-mail support with an average response time of three hours or less for Xdrive Plus customers. For more information, see <http://www.xdrive.com/support/index.jsp> .

PRICING:



Xdrive Plus (Basic Plan) allows for 5 GB total storage at \$9.95 monthly, or \$99.50 per year (2 months free).

Xdrive Workgroup (Basic Plan) with one administrator account and 4 additional accounts allows for 25 GB total storage at \$99.50 monthly, or \$995.00 per year (2 months free).

Streamload Inc.

185 West F Street
Suite 430
San Diego, CA 92101

(619) 233-9914

<http://www.streamload.com>

Streamload enables you to transfer files with clients no matter what the file size. Their pricing model is based on bandwidth instead of storage. You aren't charged for uploads or storage, only for how much is downloaded from your account. This service caters mainly to the younger crowd where streaming music and video is the primary use, but any type of file sharing works as well. There is a Streamloader desktop application that provides a few minor enhancements, but everything you need to do can be done equally as well with just your web browser.

Note: The web forms function well, but I discovered that the input lines for text will freeze if you allow your mouse pointer to move above or below the line while typing. Minor glitch.

Streamload provides graphical and easy-to-follow instructions on their website. Here is a good review of their features (<http://www.streamload.com/About/UsingStreamload.asp>).

RETRIEVING DOWNLOADS:



- You can make up to 50,000 gigabytes (50 TB) of files available to anyone online by sending them a secure email link to it. Space won't be a problem.
- Clients can download via the email link without having to register first. You pay according to the amount downloaded from your account. You can restrict downloads by expiration date, or by the number of downloads allowed per client.

PROS:



1. UPLOADS - Clients do not need to sign up for an account. If they know your account name, they can use the upload button on the home page of the Streamload website to upload files to you.
2. DOWNLOADS - Easy for the client – they just click on the link.
3. No special software requirements. Current versions of Internet Explorer, Firefox, or Netscape Navigator are supported.
4. Could be the least expensive service to use – depending upon usage.

CONS:



1. Emails to clients contain automated message stamps at the bottom with silly slogans, “fortunes”, or quips not appropriate for business use. May offend some people.
2. Cannot view .PDF files online, they must be downloaded. Pictures view OK.
3. “Freeloader” Trial Account does not allow sending email links to test with.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT:



Email only. The inquiry I sent Saturday was assigned a case ID #, but no human response was received until late Wednesday afternoon. I also found an online forum (<http://noated.net/forum/viewforum.php?f=21>) where Streamload user comments suggested mixed experiences with tech support. This could be indicative of an understaffed operation, or a lack of upper management leadership.

PRICING:



The Streamload Basic account provides for downloads up to 1 GB per month for \$4.95 or 12GB per year for \$44.95. Storage space is unlimited. Other pricing plans shown here (<http://www.streamload.com/Account/Pricing.asp>) .

Easiest File System.com

M.W.S.
Dave Carson
10713 Overbrook
Houston, TX 77042

<http://www.easiestfilesystem.com>

Features basic file and folder functions, sharing capabilities, zip, mp3 and photo support. Unlike the previous 2 providers, Easiest allows you to open and view files online before you download them. They also provide ftp access for those that have their own ftp client and don't want to use the web-based interface. The web interface is not as pretty as the others, but it wasn't too hard to figure out.

I'm always a little suspicious of anyone who does business from behind a curtain. By that I mean, trying to conceal one's identity. I had to lookup the owner of their domain name just to find out who and where they are. The lack of company information disclosed on their website tells me this is a small, part-time side business being run by a small group of individuals. While I like the demo system OK, I wouldn't count on them being around for very long.

RETRIEVING DOWNLOADS:



You can determine whether you want the client to download the file, or open a folder containing the file for review and add comments. Retrieval is not difficult for the client if it is sent correctly.

PROS:



1. You can view files online before downloading them (but not always practical).
2. No special software requirements. Current versions of Internet Explorer, Firefox, or Netscape Navigator are supported.
3. Publishing feature allows you to email a link to direct the recipient into a read-only version of the selected folder. You can also limit the access time by the client.
4. Quick response from Customer Service via email the first time I tried. Good attitude shown.
5. Emails to clients look like they are coming from you. No additional tagging or advertising lines.

CONS:



- Clients cannot upload to your account.
- Web interface is not as nice, but functional once you learn it. It also seems to have been written by someone who doesn't speak English as a first language. You'll see what I mean if you try the demo. Grammar problems aside, it's not too hard to figure out if you play with it a while.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT:



- Support is offered by email only.
- "2-Business Day resolution for any support request". (their words).
- Service Level Agreement provides for uptime guarantees. If service levels are not met, you receive credits equal to a minimum 1 month free service.
- I received an email from them in response to my first question in only 2 hrs. On the other hand, I never received a response to my second email at all. I would consider their tech support to be inconsistent at best.

PRICING:



1GB Personal Plan is \$4.95 monthly, or \$47.50 per year. (you have to sign up with them through Pay Pal).

Executive Summary Table

Provider	Pricing	Space	PROS	CONS
Xdrive	\$99.50 Per year. (Basic Plan)	5 GB Storage Capacity	Large, established company. Highly secure data center. Full featured interface.	Client must open account to upload. Client #6 must register to download. Java VM required. Requires disable pop-up blocking. Highest price. No Service Level Agreement Cannot View files Online
Streamload	\$44.95 Per year for not exceeding 1 GB total downloads per month (Basic Plan)	Unlimited Storage Space	Easy for clients to upload to you. Easy for clients to download from you. Easy to manage Web Interface.	Email message quips annoying? No Service Level Agreement Poor Customer Service
Easiest File System	\$47.50 Per year. (Personal Plan)	1 GB Storage Capacity	Service Level Agreement. Client can view files online and add comments for your review. Fully functional online demo.	Client must open account to upload. Web interface not quite as intuitive but can be figured out during demo.

Recommendations

If the email notification quips and slow support response doesn't concern you, and you don't think you'll exceed 1GB in downloads per month, I recommend [Streamload](#). It's the lowest cost to you, and the easiest for your clients to use for both downloading and uploading large files. It also has the most intuitive and straight-forward web-interface.

If the Streamload cons are unacceptable for your business, or you expect more download activity than 1 GB per month, my next choice would be [EasiestFileSystem](#). Customer Service is slightly better. It takes a little longer to figure out how to use it effectively, but works fine after the learning curve. Just make sure you have backup copies of all your files in case they go away suddenly.