



## Better Monitoring with WebWatchBot Series

### Performance: Measuring Website Performance

What is the performance of your website, e.g. average response time per page, total load time of a transaction, etc.? 5 seconds? Less than one second? Are you sure?

Website performance monitoring is more than just keeping count of the number of visitors and page views a website receives. Companies and organizations that don't actively monitor performance, usually react to problems with performance only when they occur. A proactive strategy is to continually monitor performance by collecting data early and often.

The key performance measurement is response time: the total amount of time it takes to load a web page from start to finish, including images and anything else that is on a page. This key metric must be measured by a tool that does not use a client-side cache – think Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc. – and must measure all aspects of a web page.

Response time measured in this way is like gauging the experience of a first-time user to your website who may or may not revisit based on how fast your site loads. It is not the same as a person in your company who is visiting your website for the fifth time today, whose browser has most of the images cached and possibly the web page HTML source as well.

By measuring response time on a regular basis over time, a response time average can be calculated and trends will emerge. For example, after collecting data once every 5 minutes over one week a comprehensive view of performance will emerge based on: hour of the day and day of the week.

With trend data, important conclusions can be drawn. If performance is affected by the hour of the day and directly proportional to traffic, then over time, decisions can be made such as adding new hardware, load balancing, application optimization, etc.

Furthermore, collecting and analyzing data when website changes are made, educated conclusions can be drawn to whether a change has helped or hindered website performance.

To get a sense of how good or bad your website's performance is, measurement of your competitor's website performance is essential. A simple example is to measure your home page against 5 competitor home pages, collecting data once every five minutes for a one week period.

After competitor data is collected, side-by-side comparisons will immediately reveal who the winners and losers are in the website performance competition. If XYZ Company's website is faster than anyone else's, you can bet that they aren't losing potential customers due to slow performance.

Response time is everything. Response time data collected over time is the only way to truly understand your website's performance; and, monitoring your competitors' website performance can give you a competitive advantage.