



Better Monitoring with WebWatchBot Series

Strategies and Tactics: Website speed: How fast should your website be?

How fast does your website load and how fast should it be? People in the industry often talk about the mythical “sub-second page load”, but how many websites actually deliver sub-second response times and is it a realistic goal or expectation?

The most popular websites on the web today do load quickly. For example, yahoo.com and google.com which contain simple text and a few small images load on average in 1 second which is admirable. Amazon.com which has dynamic content and numerous images weighs in at a hefty 5 seconds on average. At the far end of the scale the popular online auction house, eBay.com, can take even longer to load.

The Internet giants don’t meet the gold standard of page load response times; therefore, should you be worried that your website doesn’t load in less than 1 second. Yes and no. The obvious bottom-line is to have your web pages load as quickly as possible, while taking into account business objectives for your website.

E-commerce websites, which have more images and use a database back-end, will take longer to render a web page. For websites that contain pages with more than 10 images shown on a web page, consider two suggestions:

First, host images on a separate web server than the main web server. This allows a web page to load quickly in the client’s browser. To the user, the page will appear to load very quickly, even though the entire page has not completely loaded all of the images.

Second, don’t run the database server for the website on the same machine as the web server. When push comes to shove for machine resources, both the web server and database server will slug it out and slow all operations down.

For all websites, consider server side caching your best friend. The .NET framework includes useful built-in caching to conserve server resources and offers a considerable boost in performance over standard ASP driven websites. Also recommended is Port 80 Software’s httpZip which can handle web pages, regardless of how they are created whether it is ASP, ASP.NET, php, or vanilla HTML.

In conclusion, set realistic goals for your website’s page load times. Take into account all of the pieces of software needed to create the pages on your website and constantly work on different aspects to achieve performance gains.