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Web Performance Tuning, 2nd Edition (O'Reilly Internet)



Synopsis

As long as there's been a Web, people have been trying to make it faster. The maturation of the Web has meant more users, more data, more features, and consequently longer waits on the Web. Improved performance has become a critical factor in determining the usability of the Web in general and of individual sites in particular. *Web Performance Tuning, 2nd Edition* is about getting the best possible performance from the Web. This book isn't just about tuning web server software; it's also about streamlining web content, getting optimal performance from a browser, tuning both client and server hardware, and maximizing the capacity of the network itself. *Web Performance Tuning* hits the ground running, giving concrete advice for quick results -- the "blunt instruments" for improving crippled performance right away. The book then shifts gears to give a conceptual background of the principles of computing performance. The latter half of the book examines each element of a web transaction -- from client to network to server -- to find the weak links in the chain and show how to strengthen them. In this second edition, the book has been significantly expanded to include:

- New chapters on Web site architecture, security, reliability, and their impact on performance
- Detailed discussion of scalability of Java on multi-processor servers
- Perl scripts for writing web performance spiders that handle logins, cookies, SSL, and more
- Detailed instructions on how to use Perl DBI and the open source program gnuplot to generate performance graphs on the fly
- Coverage of rstat, a Unix-based open source utility for gathering performance statistics remotely

In addition, the book includes many more examples and graphs of real-world performance problems and their solutions, and has been updated for Java 2. This book is for anyone who has waited too long for a web page to display, or watched the servers they manage slow to a crawl. It's about making the Web more usable for everyone.

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Customer Reviews

"Web Performance Tuning" delivers a comprehensive overview of the factors that affect Web performance and what you can do about them. While the book presents a few tips for faster browsing, the majority of the text is devoted to Web server tuning. The explanations are clear and informative, and will let Webmasters get to work right away, assuming, unfortunately, that their servers are running either Solaris or Linux. The author provides virtually no specific coverage of other UNIXes, or of Windows NT or Mac OS server platforms; Microsoft IIS is discussed only once in the entire 350-page book. While the book's general concepts and explanations will be useful to most Webmasters, many of the specific details the author presents do not translate well to non-UNIX platforms. The book's first section, Preliminary Considerations, is an outstanding analysis of the relationships between bandwidth, latency, server memory, CPU speed, traffic levels, user expectations and cost. Along the way, the author highlights the extreme gap between real-world performance requirements and the artificial numbers generated by benchmark tools. He notes that a full T1 line can only carry 33 hits per second (at 4K each), and that a million hits per day translates into a peak server load of only about 25-30 hits per second. These real-world numbers are then contrasted with the hundreds or thousands of hits per second usually quoted by vendors, which the author refers to as "benchmarking." Refreshingly, the author then describes how to create practical benchmark scenarios for your own Web servers, and how to use them effectively. The second section, Tuning In Depth, briefly discusses Web client tuning, and then addresses the details of network, Web server, and CGI tuning.

This book is both a great reference and superb introductory guide to the essentials of tuning a web site. All the elements are covered, with chapters on client hardware, network protocols, and server software to name a few. How each element affects performance is discussed along with a description of tools to monitor and tune performance. The chapter on content should be required reading for anyone putting together HTML pages no matter how large their site. The prose is readable and each chapter is nicely summarized with several concise "Key Recommendations". Unless you are building your own web site from scratch, you won't have to know everything in this book, but you may want to anyway, if for no other reason than to know who to blame when your web

site is not performing well. As the web is changing every day some of the information is dated, especially the chapters on running server side applications. The chapter on CGI is decent, but the chapters on database and Java tuning are cursory and best covered by books dedicated to those subjects. There is nothing on active server pages. Also a chapter on balancing security versus performance would have been welcome, and hopefully will be included in a second edition. There is definitely more about UNIX than NT in the book. This doesn't matter when doing hardware and network tuning and Microsoft certainly does not help with their license restriction on the publication of IIS benchmarks. The reality is that there are more web servers running UNIX or Linux variants than NT. However, with the rapid proliferation of active server pages more should be included on NT in a future edition. Getting usable information on performance tuning is sometimes very difficult.

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