Web Performance Today

Radware

More new findings: Top ecommerce sites are 22% slower than they were last year

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Editor's note: This is based on the retail industry. Other industries may have different performance profiles.

Let me say that again, because this is a staggering fact: **The world's top ecommerce sites are 22% slower than they were last year.**

In December 2011, the median load time for a site in the Alexa Retail 2000 was 5.94 seconds. Just twelve months later, the median was 7.25 seconds. At this rate of growth, this number could hit almost 9 seconds by the end of this year.

This was the key finding of our **brand-new quarterly report** (yes, a new report, not to be confused with last week's report about web performance in the EU) on ecommerce web performance. If you're new to these reports, since 2010 we've been measuring the load time, page composition, and best practice implementation of the same set of 2,000 leading online retailers, as ranked by Alexa. The goal is to learn how pages are changing over time and what impact, if any, these changes have on per-page performance. The results have been eye-opening.

I have to confess that I frequently feel like that tiresome guy at the party who keeps saying the same things over and over again. *Pages are getting slower… pages are getting bigger… the gap between load times and user expectations is getting wider almost by the week.* If you're reading this out there and saying to yourself, "I can't believe that Bixby guy is going on about this AGAIN," then forward the next part of this post to five people you think could really benefit from it. If enough people internalize this message, maybe I'll shut up.*

Three performance myths I would give anything to permanently bust:

Myth #1. Pages are, de facto, getting faster.

What with our better systems, networks, and browsers, pages must be getting faster, right? Everyone believes this instinctively, because most of us seem to be hardwired to believe that technology solves problems rather than creating new ones. But as I said at the top of this post, the quickly emerging fact is that pages seem to not just be getting slower, they're getting slower at an alarming rate. (Optional: You may choose to take this finding as proof that we shouldn't always trust our instincts. 😄)

Myth #2. Users are more or less satisfied with the status quo.

"People are used to pages that take 5-8 seconds to load. They don't mind that much." I still hear this on a regular basis. Site owners rationalize that, because they're not hearing a lot of complaints, their visitors are happy… or at least happy enough. But as numerous case studies have shown, people talk with their wallets. Faster sites earn more. And user surveys over the years are telling us that people's expectations for a speedy online experience are continually growing:

User load time expectations: 2010-2012
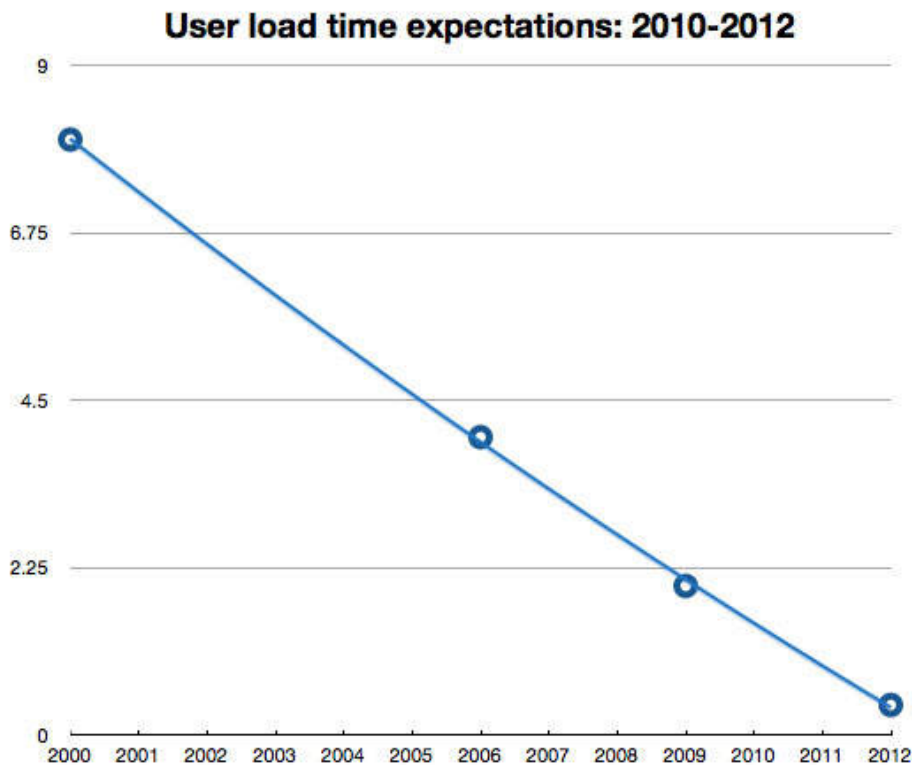
Myth #3. Browser development is more than capable of mitigating the factors, such as page size and complexity, that are causing pages to slow down.

This belief is widely held, even among technical folks. Again, looking to our findings, we saw that for all three browsers, median load times slowed down by anywhere from 3% to 12% in just six months. This downward trend isn't a browser development issue. Instead, it's an indicator that despite browser vendors' huge commitment to speed, development can't keep pace with the demands of bigger and increasingly complex web pages.

Takeaway: Pass it on.

I am extremely happy that Radware is committed to continuing the tradition of releasing these quarterly "state of the union" reports. As time passes, we're gaining some invaluable insights. Based on these latest results, I'm very curious to see what our Summer 2013 report will hold.

I urge you to download this report [State of the Union, Spring 2013] (and the infographics, too). And I was only slightly kidding when I suggested that you forward this post to people who need to have a few performance myths dispelled. Our community does a lot of preaching to the choir. What seems basic to us is not necessarily basic to the rest of the world. We need to get out there and make sure these simple messages are being heard.