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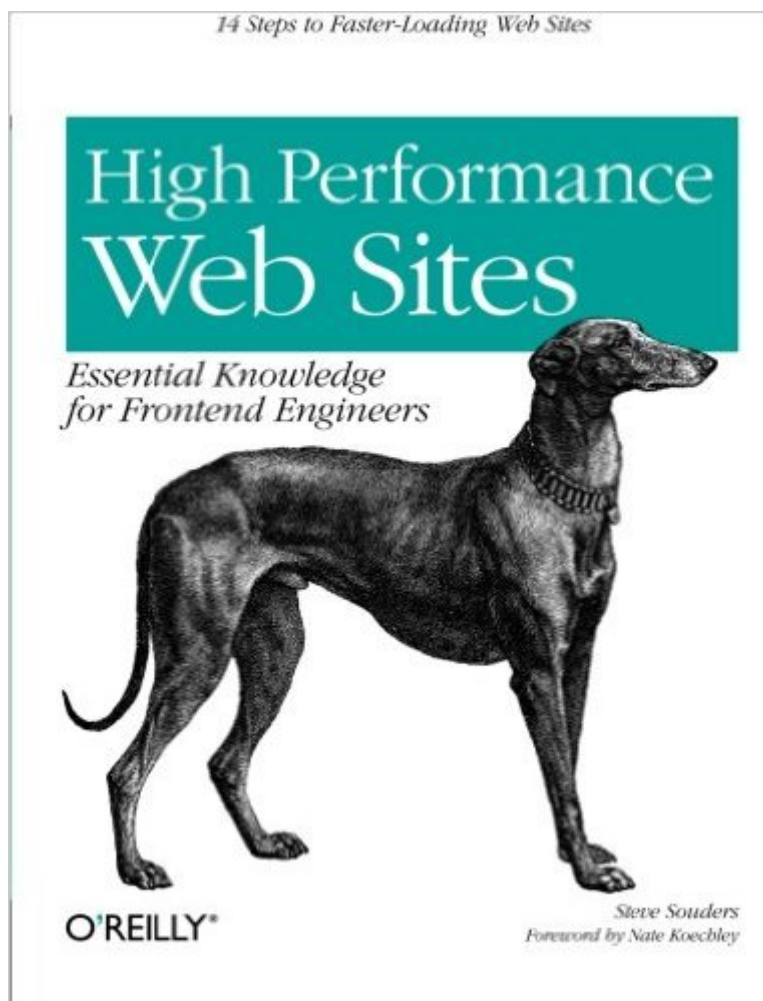
High Performance Web Sites: Essential Knowledge For Front-End Engineers

Synopsis

Want your web site to display more quickly? This book presents 14 specific rules that will cut 25% to 50% off response time when users request a page. Author Steve Souders, in his job as Chief Performance Yahoo!, collected these best practices while optimizing some of the most-visited pages on the Web. Even sites that had already been highly optimized, such as Yahoo! Search and the Yahoo! Front Page, were able to benefit from these surprisingly simple performance guidelines.The rules in High Performance Web Sites explain how you can optimize the performance of the Ajax, CSS, JavaScript, Flash, and images that you've already built into your site -- adjustments that are critical for any rich web application. Other sources of information pay a lot of attention to tuning web servers, databases, and hardware, but the bulk of display time is taken up on the browser side and by the communication between server and browser. High Performance Web Sites covers every aspect of that process.Each performance rule is supported by specific examples, and code snippets are available on the book's companion web site. The rules include how to:Make Fewer HTTP RequestsUse a Content Delivery NetworkAdd an Expires HeaderGzip ComponentsPut Stylesheets at the TopPut Scripts at the BottomAvoid CSS ExpressionsMake JavaScript and CSS ExternalReduce DNS LookupsMinify JavaScriptAvoid RedirectsRemove Duplicates ScriptsConfigure ETagsMake Ajax CacheableIf you're building pages for high traffic destinations and want to optimize the experience of users visiting your site, this book is indispensable."If everyone would implement just 20% of Steve's guidelines, the Web would be adramatically better place. Between this book and Steve's YSlow extension, there's reallyno excuse for having a sluggish web site anymore."-Joe Hewitt, Developer of Firebug debugger and Mozilla's DOM Inspector"Steve Souders has done a fantastic job of distilling a massive, semi-arcane art down to a set of concise, actionable, pragmatic engineering steps that will change the world of web performance."-Eric Lawrence, Developer of the Fiddler Web Debugger, Microsoft Corporation

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Customer Reviews

Ã Â§_High Performance Web Sites_ is one of those books that will get read by more people than buy it because it is both a fast read and organized into clearly differentiated subjects. This makes it easy to pick up for a moment or pass along to team members with different specialties.Each of these "14 Steps to Faster-Loading Web Sites" (listed in the editorial review above) is itself divided into related tips with practical pointers. The fact that the book is full of these pointers is not the only value I extracted. We also get something a bit more subtle. The fact that the author is a performance expert at one of the mega-companies that define the Web for most of us lends authority to the book. It is easy to have confidence that his practical experience will have immediate lessons for teams with the same problems, if on a smaller scale.Steve Souders provides a special addition to his tips: his example pages offer direct comparisons and means to make our own tests. This is something rarely encountered in such books. The book ends with a 30-page chapter where he deconstructs 10 of the top Web sites in the U.S. using the rules and tools described in the book.Ã Â§

The ideas in the book are excellent. I'm all for an organized checklist of techniques to make web sites faster. The problem, is that once you have read the documentation for Yslow (the firebug plugin that grades sites based on these criteria) you will find the book provides little to no more substantive information. I had looked forward to it, purchased it, and have since given it away. I tried to give it the benefit of the doubt, as I love the ideas, but this book just didn't deliver.

While the information in the book is good information to know, it is (as others have said) information that pretty much gave a "yeah, I knew that" type of impression. And at only 137 pages of text, it's a very light read. If you are a new web developer, this is a nice collection of tips. As an experienced developer, there's nothing new here. And at $29 for its minimal 137 pages, it's really just an expensive checklist of 14 simple items. Too pricey for what you get in my opinion.

Not only does Steve Souders have the credentials to write this book (he's the chief performance guy for Yahoo!), he's also written a book that is an easy read and will give you everything you need to easily improve your web site performance.Each of the 14 tips is well explained together with examples from real world sites that show how the tip has been used or how it would have helped. Some are harder to do (Use a Content Delivery Network) if you're just working on a small site or an internal web application. But most are easy to implement (GZip components, Make JavaScript and CSS External) and you'll see the results immediately.This book should be on your Essential Reading bookshelf if you're a web developer or a member of the performance team for any organization. Keep it a secret and amaze your colleagues by making small changes and demonstrating big performance improvements. Alternately spread the word about this book and let everyone benefit.Oh, and if you already own Web Performance Tuning, 2nd Edition (O'Reilly Internet), don't be scared by this new book. It's a much easier read and it also is aware of Ajax and new web development techniques.

This book is full of information that you just can't find anywhere else. So often, we rely on gross generalizations about what happens when the browser fetches a web page. This book explains, with great clarity, the details of what really happens, and how lots of small details affect performance dramatically. It gives specific recommendations for how to improve performance, and then dissects the top 10 sites and shows how they perform and why.

A web, database and compiled application developer of over 7 years, I read a lot. Typically about a thousand pages a week worth of technical books (cover to cover, my wife thinks I'm nuts). Having read this one recently it is the first to have compelled me to write an book review.My hat is off to Steve Souders. The book is perfectly organized and packed with his valuable insights into what matters most when working to optimize website performance.To everyone thinking about buying this book, I encourage you to do so. It's a great read and can give even seasoned web programmers valuable new insights into how to improve site performance. Steve is one of those rare authors that is both smart enough to boil complex subjects down into simple explanations and nice enough to do it for his readers with a consistency that is rare even among the best technical writers. To top it all he manages to do so with a light, frank style.A joy to read. Thanks Steve. Can't wait for your next book.

One of the most noticeable and least expensive improvements you can make to increase the speed of your website is to implement these front-end techniques.It is true that the 14 principles can be found in the description of the book, or with the excellent YSlow tool delivered by Yahoo! Developer Network.So why should you buy the book??The book explains "why" these 14 principles are best, and it does so in a concise format.If you currently work professionally with the front-end side of a website (or would like to someday) this book should be considered a required read. At less than US$30, it is an inexpensive investment into your on-going education.Don't settle with just knowing "how" to make your site faster, get the book and learn "why" these steps make your site faster. You'll be a better and more valuable developer for it.

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