

Get FASTER Download Times By Making BIGGER Web Pages!

By Michael Hopkins

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As a webmaster you already know how important it is that your web pages download fast. In a nutshell, if your pages are slow, then you're losing visitors. And if you're losing visitors, you're losing money.

To speed up your download times, most web design experts will suggest that you optimize your GIFs and JPGs so that they download faster. They'll suggest that you make your images smaller or remove them altogether. Or they'll simply suggest that you put less stuff on your pages.

All of these methods work. The problem, however, is that they all involve doing things that you don't want to do. You don't want to squeeze any more quality and color out of your images. The same goes for your content - you put it there because you want it there. Basically, there's only so far you can go with these approaches before you really start to ruin your page.

Fortunately, there's one way to get your pages opening faster without having to compromise your images or your content. This is a simple and effective method, but one that is rarely discussed by the web design experts.

To understand this approach, it's important to recognize the difference between "perceived" download time and "actual" download time. The perceived download time is the time it takes to have enough stuff displayed on your page for the visitor to be able to start studying your content. The actual download time is the time it takes for the entire page and all its contents to be fully downloaded.

The perceived download time is the one that really counts. Why? Because once your visitor has something before his/her eyes to read or look at, then there is much less risk that he/she will click away because your page is taking too

long to load.

So how do you improve your perceived download time?

Simple, you break the content of your page down into two or more tables.

You see, web browsers will not start displaying the contents of a table until it has compiled the entire table to the end. Once a table is compiled it will display, and the browser will start compiling the next table.

That means that if you place the entire contents of your page inside one big table, the browser will have to compile the entire contents of your page before anything will be displayed. The result: your visitor spends all that time staring at a blank screen.

However, by putting some of the content towards the top of the page into a table of its own, the rest of the page can be downloading farther down, while your visitor is busy studying the stuff that's already displayed.

I've used this method to great effect on my own website. I went from an actual download time of up to 20 seconds (staring at a white screen) down to a perceived download time of rarely more than 3 seconds (often as low as 1 second)!

The ironic thing is, my page is now bigger (in terms of Kilobytes) than it was before I made the change. That's because 2 tables take more HTML than one.

But boy has that extra bit of HTML paid off!

Make a test page now and try it out. Your hit counter will thank you for it!

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