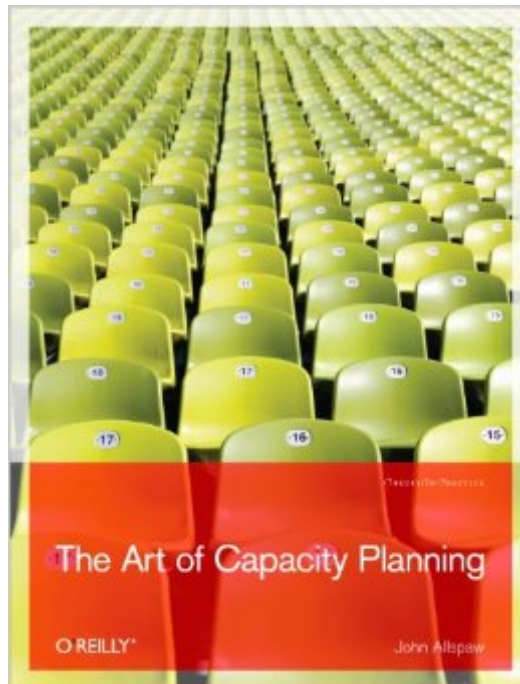


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The Art Of Capacity Planning: Scaling Web Resources



Synopsis

Success on the web is measured by usage and growth. Web-based companies live or die by the ability to scale their infrastructure to accommodate increasing demand. This book is a hands-on and practical guide to planning for such growth, with many techniques and considerations to help you plan, deploy, and manage web application infrastructure. The Art of Capacity Planning is written by the manager of data operations for the world-famous photo-sharing site Flickr.com, now owned by Yahoo! John Allspaw combines personal anecdotes from many phases of Flickr's growth with insights from his colleagues in many other industries to give you solid guidelines for measuring your growth, predicting trends, and making cost-effective preparations. Topics include: Evaluating tools for measurement and deployment Capacity analysis and prediction for storage, database, and application servers Designing architectures to easily add and measure capacity Handling sudden spikes Predicting exponential and explosive growth How cloud services such as EC2 can fit into a capacity strategy In this book, Allspaw draws on years of valuable experience, starting from the days when Flickr was relatively small and had to deal with the typical growth pains and cost/performance trade-offs of a typical company with a Web presence. The advice he offers in The Art of Capacity Planning will not only help you prepare for explosive growth, it will save you tons of grief.

Book Information

File Size: 3456 KB

Print Length: 156 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: O'Reilly Media; 1 edition (September 23, 2008)

Publication Date: February 9, 2009

Sold by: Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0026OR2Y0

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #428,067 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #100

in Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Computers & Technology > Systems Analysis & Design #269

Customer Reviews

John Allspaw has done something that very few of his peers would have been able to do. He has taken a black art, Capacity Planning, and he turned it in to a series of steps that anyone can follow. The book is filled with common case studies, for how to plan capacity for things like web server farms, database clusters, and caching layers. The real value is in watching how the author applies the same formula in each case, giving Systems Administrators and Executives the tools they need to do a better job of capacity planning in their own unique infrastructures. As the earlier review says, it's a short book. In my opinion, that's a good thing: it's goal is to teach you how to perform capacity planning in any environment. If it was longer, it would have been full of more examples, which would likely only serve to lead the reader away from the core principles. You need to learn *how* to capacity plan an infrastructure, not get pat (and often incorrect) advice on how to measure your web farm. The discussion on curve fitting and trend prediction is worth it alone - I'm aware of no other book on the topic that shows so clearly how to examine your data in service of capacity planning. It's the process I'll follow from now on.

Right out of the gate, John covers a topic near and dear to my heart: metrics. His advice? "Measure, measure, measure." John reinforces this by including an incredible number of charts throughout the book. He goes on to say that our measurement tools need to provide an easy way to:

- * Record and store data over time
- * Build custom metrics
- * Compare metrics from various sources
- * Import and export metrics

As I read the book, I found myself nodding and thinking, "yes, yes, this is exactly what I learned!" Although it's been more than five years since I was buildmaster for My Yahoo!, I really resonated with the advice John provides, like this one: "Homogenize hardware to halt headaches". (You have to love the alliteration, too.) In a thin book that's easy to read, John covers a large number of topics. He talks about load testing, with pointers to tools like Httperf and Siege. There are several sections that talk about caching architectures and the use of Squid. He provides guidelines when it comes to deployment, such as making all changes happen in one place, the importance of defining roles and services, and ensuring new servers start working automatically. At the end he even manages to cover virtualization and cloud computing, and how they come into play during capacity planning. The Art of Capacity Planning is full of sage advice from a seasoned veteran, like this one: "The moral of this little story? When faced with the question of capacity, try to ignore those urges to

make existing gear faster, and focus instead on the topic at hand: finding out what you need, and when." When I read a technical book, I'm really looking for takeaways. That's why I loved *The Art of Capacity Planning*, and I think you will, too.

The Art of Capacity Planning is a good introduction to Capacity Planning for Web Operations that touches on the following topics: * Why do you need capacity planning? * What information should you gather for capacity planning and how? * How to predict trends for your web applications? * How and when to procure new hardware? * How to create a sustainable capacity planning process? As the author mentions in the preface, the book has a lot of common sense material. Most experienced enterprise web operations architects should be familiar with this material. But, it is refreshing to see this urban wisdom captured and printed in a book format. The book is unique in that it is not meticulously organized and illustrated like a text book or a reference guide. It provides a smattering of anecdotes, examples, gotchas, and tools from the author's experience in a rapidly growing start up environment at Flickr. I am looking forward to a second edition of the book where the author can delve deeper into some missing aspects that are critical to capacity planning like log analysis and performance improvements. Enterprise web operations folks who are familiar with commercial tools like Sitescope, OpenView, Opware, Gomez, etc. rather than free/open source tools and who manage a large number of diverse applications might have a learning curve to relate the examples in the book to their environment.

I normally cannot read through instructional books but this one was easy to read and follow. This gives you a great basic knowledge of how to approach capacity planning for a web service. I have read it at least 3 times at this point and continue to reference it often. The one disappointing thing was that I was unable to figure out how to access the code online, but honestly you do not need it. Just would have been nice to see it.

This is the first book on capacity planning I have read so I have nothing substantial to compare it too at this time. John's descriptions and real world examples are great. While I was reading I felt John's analogies were very similar to the way the character Charlie from TV's "Numb3rs" explains something very complicated with a real world examples. I liked the examples of the Bacon Delivery truck and the Super-market checkout especially to visualize what was going on in the process of the servers. One huge take away was the level of importance tying application metrics and server metrics back to financial costs. SLA's don't really matter if the cost of adding another 9 to the

99.999's type model is more expensive than your client is paying you for the whole contract. In essence don't promise 99.9% over 99.0 percent if the .9 improvement will cost \$10,000 in additional hardware and the contract is only worth \$10,000. Many would argue but it is only a 9/10ths of a percent improvement how big of a deal can it be? Remember the first 1% of keeping up a server is not the same as the last 1%. The chapter on regression and line fitting was mostly a refresher. The chapters on cloud computing were excellent as real world examples are always useful for me. I also liked the fact he referred to flickr a lot, so there was a sense of walking the path vs. knowing the path. Some co-workers did joke that they must not know what they are doing because the seats are all empty on the cover. I'd be curious to see if the same book sold better with the same cover and seats filled. Other comments criticize the book for being only 150 pages but I would rather have 150 good pages than 300 bad pages any day of the week. Also the author explains the smallish size in the preface. All in all a great quick read that cut to the details and made me feel more confident I could bridge the gap between business and IT in a short amount of time.

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