Want Data

Screaming Circuits

So, I tried to participate in this SparkFun [1] "free day" this morning. They were giving out $100.00 worth of goodies for free per customer (up to a combined total of $100,000), starting at 9:00am MST (8:00am PST here in Oregon).

I was pretty excited about it and had decided to get a new PIC programmer and some pre-assembled jumper wires. I hate crimping those little things by hand. I put it on my calendar for the night before and again for that morning. Then, I found out that I had forgotten a dentist appointment at 8:00 that morning. Bummer.

Just in case it would take more than an hour to burn through that $100K, I went ahead and got ready. I logged in and put the items in my cart. I left the browser sitting there waiting. All I had to do was click the "Place Order" button when I returned after getting my teeth scraped.

But, alas, when I got back, the site was timed out and not accessibly. I refreshed, tried a different browser, refreshed again, etc. I did once get enough of the site to load to see that they had only sold through about $19,000 thus far. Okay. That's not so bad. I could finish making my latte and get in to the office. Maybe try there.

Then, at the office, I was never able to get anything at all from the site to load. All full up. I had to go to a meeting at 10:00 and I thought that if they stayed at around $20K per hour, I might just have a chance of getting through when the meeting was over. But, it was not to be. When I checked in again at 11:30, all $100,000 was sold through. My guess is that so many people were trying in the first hour that the servers only had enough bandwidth to process $20K. After that, enough people gave up trying that the hardware could get the final $80K through in the next 44 minutes ad 50 seconds.

Now here's where my quest for data comes in. I was never able to get more then one click into the process. If all connections were equal, I would presume that everyone would have had the same results. Even if by random chance, someone found a pause long enough to get one page loaded, the chances of each subsequent step would drop astronomically. So, what is it about the Internet that gives some people priority over others? I'd love to see a geographic overlay of the folks that got an order placed combined with their distance from a backbone. Is it distance from a backbone (in hops or in miles) or is it distance from the SparkFun

server?

In any case, good for them. It was a fun idea and great gesture of "thanks" Bummer for the inability to handle the load. Here's a Twitter quote from Chris Anderson on the subject: "*Google's servers can't keep up with Nexus demand; Free Day brings down Sparkfun. It's 2010--why do we still have these scaling problems?*" Ironically, when I first went to Twitter to copy that quote, Twitter was reporting over capacity and I had to wait a while for all the tweets to come back.

Duane Benson
If only my packets were more aggressive...

SOURCE [2]

Source URL (retrieved on *07/25/2014 - 3:26am*):
http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2010/01/want-data

Links:
[1] http://www.sparkfun.com
[2] http://blog.screamingcircuits.com/2010/01/data.html