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ULTIMATE GUIDE

SHIT... MY WEBSITES DOWN



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR WEBSITE GOES DOWN

You know that your afternoons probably going to be that great . when you answer your phone to someone in marketing panicking that the company website is no longer working. It's now your responsibility to figure out what gone wrong, why and to get it up and running.

This situation has happened to me several times throughout my career and finding out what's gone wrong is difficult. What's worse is that you'll usually be under a shit ton of pressure to fix it ASAP.

This guide has been written to help you when you're in the shit. Good luck!

STEP ONE

CONFIRM WHATS WRONG

The first thing you need to do is to double check that there is an issue. I've had plenty of false alarms over the years. First, you need to ensure that the site is actually broken for the world and not just the person reporting it. Try loading the site yourself, then try again on your mobile. In a lot of cases, it might be that your companies internet connection is broken.



- ☐ CHECK FOR YOURSELF THE SITE IS DOWN
- ☐ CHECK THAT MORE PAGES THAN THE HOMEPAGE IS BROKEN
- ☐ CHECK THAT YOU CAN REPLICATE THE ISSUE

Sometimes people browser cache can become corrupted, can more than one person replicate the issue?
- ☐ IF LOAD BALANCED, ARE ALL SERVERS AFFECTED?
- ☐ IS THE ISSUE HAPPENING ON MORE THAN ONE COMPUTER?

If you can't replicate the issue, that doesn't mean there isn't something wrong. Developers usually have special permissions that other staff members don't have. If you can't replicate the issue, who can?
- ☐ LOG ONTO THE SERVER

Logging onto the server and trying to load the website using localhost is usually the next best step. This can rule out any internal network issues that may exist. Check that the site is still running in IIS. If the site is running, then check the task explorer to check the CPU usage and memory usage.

STEP TWO

TRY TO GET THE SITE UP AND RUNNING

When a site is down you have several options. Most people want the site back-up and running ASAP. Others may care to leave the site broken in order to figure out what exactly gone wrong.

Usually, the first step is to give it the website a kick to try to get it back up and running.



IIS RESET

The quickest thing to get a website working again is an IIS reset on the server. Warning, this may reset any session data, log people out of the website and a whole number of other things.



'POWERCYCLE' THE SERVER

The new term for rebooting the server, if an IIS reset doesn't work, this is the next go-to move.



CLEAR YOUR TEMPORARY .NET FILES



REVERT LAST CODE DEPLOYMENT



BACK EVERYTHING UP

Before attempting anything else, make sure you have a backup, or at least you can rollback any 'fixes' you make. If you think things are bad now, they will only get worse if you do something silly and can't rollback.

STEP THREE

FIND THE CAUSE

This step is easier said than done and in a lot of cases it's actually more difficult to find the cause of the error than coming up with a resolution.

How easy it is to find the error will depend on how much time you put in ahead of time. Making sure that you spend some time logging everything you need.



CHECK THE LOGS

There are usually a few logs that you can check:

- IIS LOGS
- CMS LOGs
- NEW RELIC LOGS
- WINDOWS EVENT LOGS
- APPLICATION INSIGHT LOGS



HAS A CODE RELEASE BEEN MADE

Did anyone do a release within the last 24 hours, Has infrastructure upgrade the hardware, or, changed a Firewall rule? Websites hardly ever crash for no reason. In most situations, something has changed to cause the issue.



HAS ANY CONTENT BEEN PUBLISHED?

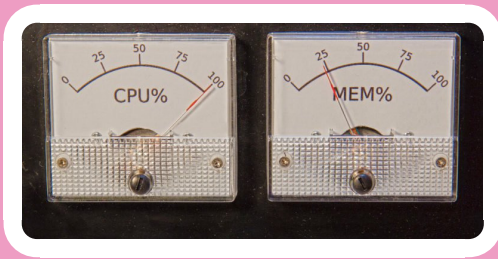


USE FIDDLER/CHROME DEVELOPER TOOLS LOAD THE PAGE AND TRACE THE ISSUE,



USE A SQL PROFILER TO CHECK DATABASE REQUEST

<https://expressprofiler.codeplex.com>



HIGH CPU USAGE ERRORS

When you see CPU spikes, there are usually two main culprits. One, something has run out of space/reached maximum capacity, or two, something can't be found and your CMS is now stuck trying to find the missing resource.

- ☐ DATABASE TABLES HAVE BECOME TOO LARGE
- ☐ SERVER RUN OUT OF DISK SPACE
- ☐ SERVER UNDERSPECCECD
- ☐ APPLY ANY WINDOWS UPDATES IF REQUIRED
- ☐ UNINSTALL RECENT WINDOWS UPDATES
- ☐ ARE YOU USING SESSIONS? SESSIONS CAUSE LOCKING AND CAN CAUSE A BOTTLENECKS
- ☐ ARE YOU USING SESSIONS? SESSIONS CAUSE LOCKING AND CAN CAUSE A BOTTLENECKS
- ☐ USE DEBUGDIAG TO GET A SERVER DUMP

<https://kb.sitecore.net/articles/499200>



IF YOU USE REDIS, IS YOUR REDIS INSTANCE UP AND RUNNING



OPEN WINDOWS TASK MANAGER AND CHECK W3WP.EXE IS THE ISSUE. IF NOT FIND THE PROGRAM RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ISSUE



INSTALL MINI=PROFILER AND TRACE WHERE THE ISSUES GOING

<http://miniprofiler.com/>



INSTALL GLIMPSE AND TRACE WHERE THE ISSUES GOING

<http://getglimpse.com/>



CHECK A NUMBER OF INCOMING REQUESTS, ARE YOU UNDER A DDOS THREAT?

ENABLE DDOS PROTECTION IF YOU HAVE GOT IT



DOES YOUR SERVER/WEBSITE USE ANY SCHEDULED TASKS. ARE THEY PERFORMING CORRECTLY



DOES YOUR PAGE HAVE ANY INTERNAL OR THIRD-PARTY API CALLS? ARE THEY RUNNING?



DOES YOUR PAGE HAVE ANY THIRD PARTY INTERGRATIONS, TWITTER, TRUST PILOT, FACEBOOK,. ARE THESE AVAILABLE

WEBSITE CRASHING

The second worst thing that can happen after high CPU performance is your website randomly crashing. There are endless reasons why a website could go down. There could be a problem in the code. There could be a problem with the server. There could be a cyber terrorist organization that's spamming your site to prove a point to the world.



☐ IS IIS'S RAPID FAIL PROTECTION BEING TRIGGERED

if more than 5 503 errors are triggered within 5 minutes IIS can reset. Check your code/pages to ensure nothing is triggering a 503. This has happened to me. This has happened to me before.
<https://weblog.west-wind.com/posts/2006/Dec/19/IIS-7-and-Rapid-Fail-Protection>

☐ EXPIRED APP POOL SERVICE ACCOUNT PASSWORD

If your application pool uses a service account, then check that the password on the service account has not expired or perhaps the password has been changed on the account. Otherwise, your site will crash

☐ ENSURE THE ACCOUNT HAS NOT BEEN LOCKED OUT IN ACTIVE DIRECTORY

☐ ENSURE THAT THE APPLICATION POOL IDENTITY HAS NOT HAD ITS PERMISSIONS CHANGED ON ANY OF THE REQUIRED APPLICATION DIRECTORIES

☐ INSTALL ELMAH AND CHECK UNHANDLED EXCEPTIONS

<http://www.raboof.com/projects/elmah/>

☐ INSTALL REDGATE'S ANTS PERFORMANCE PROFILER.

<https://www.red-gate.com/products/dotnet-development/ants-performance-profiler/>

CMS ISSUES

IF your website goes down, it might not be a server or code issue. It could be an issue with your CMS. There are a number of reasons how a CMS can take down the page, , incompatible plugins, database errors, and other conflicts can be responsible for a site loading a blank page, partially loading, or not loading at all.



- ☐ HAS SOMEONE UPLOADED A STUPIDLY BIG IMAGE
- ☐ REINDEX THE SEARCH/CLEAR SEARCH INDEX
- ☐ CHECK 404 PAGE IS SET AND WORKS
- ☐ CHECK SEARCH WORKS
- ☐ HAS YOUR NAVIGATION TREE GOT TOO MANY PAGES UNDERNEATH IT?
- ☐ OPEN A TICKET ON THE CMS FORUMS
- ☐ CMS TREE TOO BIG
- ☐ TOO MUCH MEDIA