

What's the rationale behind the claim "PHP doesn't scale up (well)"?

[closed]

Asked 12 years, 10 months ago Modified 11 years, 3 months ago


Viewed 4k times  Part of [PHP](#) Collective



10



Closed. This question is [off-topic](#). It is not currently accepting answers.

 **Want to improve this question?** [Update the question](#) so it's [on-topic](#) for Stack Overflow.

Closed 12 years ago.

[Improve this question](#)

I've recently picked up PHP and it seems rather neat language enabling very quick web application development (probably faster than my personal favorite - Java :)

Now, I'm no PHP expert - neither with the language nor its internals/specifcs. But quite a few of my peers have made the claim that *PHP applications don't scale up well* - a fact that I've not been able to figure out for myself and hence the question.

I've just learnt the procedural flavor of PHP and my only guess of non-scalability is that of *scalability* of procedural vs. OO languages (C vs. C++/Java). I agree and I can see how that would be a hurdle for extremely complex web applications. However, I'm aware of OO-ness coming to the PHP world and don't see that to be much of a hurdle (please correct me if my hypothesis is incorrect).

Other than that I don't understand what scalability problems would arise for a web application with a large number of users (for the sake of discussion, let's assume a Restful design - no sessions - since I am aware of how that impedes scalability). I'm more interested in knowing 'objective' reasons for such a claim, if possible.

Subjectivity is fine but I'm not here to start a debate as to PHP vs. everything else. I'm only interested in knowing what are the potential limitations of this language that I must keep in mind and should not bite me in the behind later if/when the web application were to have 1000's of users a day (or hour).

PHP php scalability

Share

Improve this question

Follow

edited Sep 4, 2013 at 15:33




user1228

asked Feb 10, 2012 at 4:56



PhD

11.3k 15 68 115

This has been discussed many a time (google php scalability). Also, some of the biggest websites in the world are powered by PHP. – [simshaun](#) Feb 10, 2012 at 4:59 

- 2 @simshaun: Could you please provide me some links? That could help me flag my own Q as a duplicate and have it closed - just need a rationale behind the claim :P – [PhD](#) Feb 10, 2012 at 5:00

The top-most result is "PHP Scalability Myth" - onjava.com/onjava/2003/10/15/php_scalability.html - its quite dated though! – [PhD](#) Feb 10, 2012 at 5:16

1 Answer

Sorted by:

Highest score (default)



6

I can't think of a language that has a scalability limitation. A scalability limitation for a language would be something like:



Language X can't be used to write programs that require more than 1000 lines of code.



That sounds ridiculous, and it is.



The stigma that *PHP applications don't scale well* comes from the fact that many inexperienced programmers choose PHP for their web applications. This is because PHP is an easy language to learn, integrates extremely well with Apache, and is supported on nearly every host in the world.

Inexperienced programmers will often use bad practices when writing code. Given enough of these bad practices littered throughout the web, written in the inexperienced programmer's favorite language, it's easy to see why some people are averse to PHP.

There's also, probably, a "holier-than-thou" attitude that some programmers have toward PHP (again, because of its simplicity).

PHP scales just as well as any other language when page caching and best practices are taken into account. There are plenty of well-used PHP projects to prove it.

Share Improve this answer

answered Feb 10, 2012 at 5:12

Follow



qxn

17.6k ● 3 ● 53 ● 71

1 How about the fact that PHP is single threaded? – [H.Rabiee](#)
Aug 2, 2013 at 15:01

3 @Ken This is just a flat-out False answer. Language X can't be used to write programs that require more than 1000 lines of code sound ridiculous, because that's not at all what is meant by scalability. You can't think of a scalability limitation, because you have no idea what it means. Python and PHP are both languages that exhibit vertical scaling limitations because they can only be run on a single native thread. I am not sure about horizontal scaling, but I can imagine PHP doesn't do that well either.
– [taylorcressy](#) Sep 23, 2014 at 20:14 ✎

@taylorcressy - Not sure what the link has to do with the scalability of a programming language. Scaling an application

might require those techniques, but the language in which the application is written is arbitrary. – [qxn](#) Sep 25, 2014 at 15:38

@Ken After I had responded to this answer, I started looking it up and apparently there is a tremendous amount of debate on this issue. I had no idea. Basically, the concept of a scalable programming language means many things to different people and has become rather subjective. Just look at all the debate about Scala (WOW!) Regardless, the comments in your answer still do not make sense. Given your take on scalability, PHP still does not scale that well. (Yes, I often program in PHP, amongst many other things.)

– [taylorcressy](#) Sep 25, 2014 at 16:32
