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Sun(burned) - A Review of Sun's 'Environmentally Friendly' T2000 Server



Chris Steins

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Note to readers: Justin Emond is a project manager and web developer at [Urban Insight](#), and a former IT manager for the University of Southern California's School of Theatre.

By Justin Emond
My First Experience with a Sun Server.

I was excited when the company I work for decided to take advantage of Sun's [Try and Buy program](#), where you can test drive a Sun Server T2000 free of charge for 60 days.

We were hoping to test drive the T2000 as a web server (Apache and MySQL), and compare its performance to the Redhat Enterprise systems we currently use for hosting public (PHP) websites. As an added bonus, the fact that the T2000 is billed as an [environmentally friendly server](#) was exciting to us, as our business is in the Urban Planning community and we are always interested in supporting -- and promoting -- technologies that reduce humanity's ecological footprint.

By the instant the server arrived, I was excited. It was immediately clear that Sun knew how to make a server with an entrance: it came on a pallet. I've bought loads of servers, but none ever came on a pallet before. I was impressed. Pulling the server out of the box (with help) I got my first glance at the shiny, well-polished case with a beautiful "Sun" logo proudly displayed. I thought, A mighty Sun server all to my self for 60 days -- What couldn't I do with it? It was time to turn it on.

I was pretty embarrassed to admit this to my co-workers, but after fiddling around with the server and reading Sun documentation for about two hours I was unable to turn the server on. So I did what all techies do when they are stuck: I called tech support.

But I found out you can't call Sun tech support. They call you. So I left a message with a nice phone operator and was promised a call back in two days. I heard back in about 72 hours. When I eventually connected with the Sun tech on the phone I was expecting to be up and running quickly, but it took the tech about a half hour and a call the Sun engineers to discover that the server was supposed to ship with an RJ-45 to serial adapter, but it hadn't. So they sent me one in the mail.

When the adapter came I hurriedly wired a Windows laptop to the server's management port, got access to the system ALOM console and managed to boot the server! After following several simple on screen prompts, I arrived at a screen that asked me to choose my terminal from a list. I didn't make much sense of the list but I did identify an optional of "PC terminal" that seemed likely (as I was using a PC terminal emulator on a PC), so I picked that one.

That moved me to a new screen that was mostly blank, save for a title and a sometimes visible blinking cursor. Pressing keys produced unpredictable results, so I exited to the ALOM console and forced a command prompt power cycle. I rebooted the machine several times -- ultimately trying several different terminals types -- but the same problem always happened.

By this time our trial period was nearing the end and I couldn't risk being charged for a server I couldn't effectively turn on. Admitting that my own inability with Sun hardware had dashed all hope, I packed up the server and readied the RMA.

I very much wanted the server to be a success. I wanted to run test versions of our web site and web applications, produce some valuable benchmarking data and even post some screenshots. I wanted to prove that a green server could be better for the owner and better for the environment, but I just couldn't turn it on.

Christopher Steins is co-founder and co-editor-in-chief of Planetizen.

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