BurdaForward

VARNISH SOFTWARE

BurdaForward uses Varnish for web application acceleration and high-performance content delivery across its web properties

Case Study:

BurdaForward

BurdaForward uses **Varnish** for web application acceleration and high-performance content delivery

Background

BurdaForward is one of Germany's largest media companies as part of Hubert Burda Media, which has been a media leader for over 100 years.

BurdaForward is a digital-first, technology-driven entity that aims to provide reliable information, intelligent services and constructive reporting through its many digital channels with an overall goal of helping people in Germany live better lives. BurdaForward is behind some of Germany's best-known and most-visited websites, such as FOCUS Online (focus.de), which boasts more than 27.67 million unique users and 219.69 million visits.

The company's website server/backend infrastructure is managed by a team of ten that focuses on stability and performance improvements while working hand in hand with a large development team that creates sites, applications and APIs for BurdaForward's media properties.

The challenge: Accelerate web applications

BurdaForward's challenge is straightforward and similar to the kinds of challenges most media organizations face: accelerating web applications and delivering content and pages as fast as possible. BurdaForward uses CDNs in front of their machines, and they try to cache as much as possible to achieve speed while delivering the most up-to-date content.

BurdaForward at a glance

Organization
- BurdaForward is a large German digital media company

Challenge
- Accelerate web applications and content delivery
- Reduce page load times
- Reduce deployment times
- Improve user experience

Varnish Enterprise
- Web and API acceleration features, including caching and cache invalidation

The solution: Varnish for high-performance content delivery

BurdaForward decided a number of years ago to adopt the open source Varnish Cache solution to help significantly reduce waiting times and page loads on their sites, improving the user experience by adding speed to the user journey. Varnish likewise helps to contribute to greater resilience in serving more simultaneous users to access the same content concurrently.

When BurdaForward experienced some challenges with the deployment of new machines, they recognized that Varnish Enterprise offered a feature set that would solve their problem. When they removed machines from a cluster and then wanted to return them back to service, the user experience was often bad, because caches weren't warm. Varnish enabled higher quality during deployments by allowing for reusing of caches, the improved storage engine for big data-sets. And having the possibility to prewarm instances with cloned traffic.

At the same time, the commercial product offered other potential uses and features, including dynamic backend DNS resolution and, of course, Varnish support when and if needed. It has also helped BurdaForward overcome some of the limitations of their legacy CMS application.

Varnish is the de facto standard for web and page acceleration, and it helps us to compensate for the shortcomings of our CMS.

-Sebastian Binder, Head of Operations, BurdaForward

Results

With a contribution from Varnish functionality, deployments have been massively improved in quality and speed. Varnish alone has not achieved these improvements, but because of how BurdaForward uses Varnish features, other processes can be sped up in the background, which all work together to maximize efficiency.

Varnish is a big contributor to our performance. While it doesn't do everything on its own, it's fair to say that if we shut down Varnish instances, the speed of delivery of websites and content would massively decrease.

-Sebastian Binder, Head of Operations, BurdaForward

BurdaForward and Varnish: What lies ahead

In the near future, BurdaForward will work on diverse cloud projects, and many things will change during that time. Varnish will undoubtedly continue to play a role.

Varnish Cache has always delivered the speed we need, and having used the open source version, our team is very experienced with Varnish. But having Varnish engineers there to help support the infrastructure, if needed, provides peace of mind.

-Sebastian Binder, Head of Operations, BurdaForward