
Content Delivery Network (CDN)

A CDN (Content Delivery Network) is a "next-level" optimization. It is not like a server configuration change or a small code modification. CDNs are paid, third-party services, and so CDN implementation of one depends on our goals, priorities and budget. CDN will help to improve the performance of our website. So this required for overall websites, but we can give a fast website access experience without a CDN – but it would probably be faster with one. For those with heavy traffic website, mission critical websites and that are serious about providing the best possible experience for all their users, a CDN should be a critical part of their optimization strategy.

The important reason for using a CDN is to improve user's experience in terms of speed, and as all of we know that – speed matters! Ensuring a consistent experience for all our users is important. Suppose website hosted in a particular area, but if majority of its users coming from an entirely different area – for example, if your site is hosted in North America, GTmetrix might report fast speeds based on our default test location, but if a good chunk of your users come from Europe, their speed will not be as fast as you experience it to be.

A global CDN would allow users from a European point of origin to fetch all static content from a nearest source. Instead of spanning the Atlantic Ocean to retrieve data, they can connect to a server in say, London, UK, to get the same data. This reduces the time it takes for a packet of data to get transfer from one designated point to another and provides a faster loading of your website. CDNs not only ensure a faster experience to our users, but they also help to prevent site crashes in the event of traffic surges – CDNs help to spread bandwidth across multiple servers, instead of one server to handle all traffic.

Implementation and Cost

Implementation

Setting up a CDN for our website is a difficult endeavour (this is totally depends on the site size/complexity), but for most websites – CDNs are easy to implement. Essentially, we need to tell the CDN which files (typically static resources) it needs to mirror. Then, we need to configure our site to send requests to those files to the CDN for handling. For anybody using a popular CMS (WordPress, Drupal, Magento, etc.), plugins exist to set our site up for to a CDN provider without much difficulty. Other implementations may involve modifying DNS records and changing the name servers of our domain.

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Cost

Most of the CDNs are third-party services (Paid) and its range from expensive, high-end setups for enterprise websites, to more cost-effective small/medium website oriented solutions. The cost of a CDN also depends on bandwidth, region reach, and/or security/SSL needs. For example, if you find that most of your users come from North America and Europe, you can omit purchasing server nodes in Asia.

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