

AKAMAI CUSTOMER STORY

Delivering Good News to Readers Across Germany

BurdaForward keeps millions of people reading online with fast, responsive websites fueled by Akamai

3x

Rise in traffic without infrastructure impact

94%

Cache hit ratio for a faster visitor experience



Provided scalability for growth while keeping costs low

Online readers flock to BurdaForward for content speed and quality

BurdaForward has driven rapid growth with its compelling, up-to-the-minute content and a uniquely transparent advertising model. The media company chose Akamai to keep its websites fast, available, and responsive, so readers keep coming back for more.

Compelling content and “goodvertising” attract readers

BurdaForward aims to improve the lives of people across Germany by delivering timely, compelling content that can make a real difference in society, focusing on solutions as well as problems. Its websites attract 40 million unique visitors every month, and on a big news day, there may be as many as 6,000 people visiting every second. The company's flagship brand is FOCUS Online, Germany's top news portal and a trusted source of information covering today's issues – the sort of website people read with a cup of coffee as they start each day. Millions of people also rely on CHIP.de for technology reviews, NetMoms for parenting advice, Finanzen100 for financial insights, The Weather Channel, and more. BurdaForward's success is built on an advertising model, which keeps content open to everyone.

“At BurdaForward, our purpose is to deliver news and information to everybody, so it doesn't make sense to put our content behind paywalls,” says Sebastian Binder, head of operations at BurdaForward. “That meant finding a creative approach to advertising, which is our main source of revenue. We wanted to turn ads into a positive, helpful experience for readers.”

BurdaForward
Das sind gute Nachrichten

BurdaForward
Munich, Germany
www.burda-forward.de

Industry
Publishing

Challenge
With millions of readers visiting its popular news and lifestyle websites, BurdaForward must ensure content speed and availability – delivering a positive customer experience and generating ad revenue.

Solutions

- Dynamic Site Delivery
- Global Traffic Management
- Edge DNS
- Image & Video Manager
- Adaptive Media Delivery



Rather than serving up traditional pop-up ads that can interrupt a website experience, the company showcases its advertisers in a less intrusive way. BurdaForward partners with its advertisers to write sponsored articles about products and services – letting readers click on what they find useful. They call it “goodvertising,” and it’s driving powerful growth. But keeping up with that growth requires constant evolution behind the scenes.

Covering breaking news – without breaking the infrastructure

BurdaForward’s success depends on the speed, availability, and responsiveness of FOCUS Online and its other websites – as well as its ability to refresh the content with up-to-the-minute information. Anything less can drive readers away and undermine the company’s “goodvertising” model, eroding customer trust and revenue. The stakes are never higher than during periods of high demand, when people across Germany are seeking credible sources of information, all at the same time.

“National news stories can make traffic on FOCUS Online shoot up to five or six times the normal volume,” says Binder. “When we send out push notifications to mobile devices, we might see hundreds of thousands of people clicking into the site all at once.”

In the time before Akamai, dealing with traffic spikes meant scaling up the infrastructure – keeping extra hardware in hot standby mode in case systems couldn’t handle the volume. That approach got expensive, and it kept the operations team in a constant state of worry that something could go wrong. Not anymore.

Ensuring predictable performance in an unpredictable news cycle

BurdaForward chose Akamai to make sure its infrastructure can handle the volume with unflinching speed and stability. Akamai products have helped the company grow smoothly over the past several years, even under unpredictable circumstances.

“During COVID-19, more people were at home surfing the internet, and our traffic massively increased,” says Binder. “With Akamai, we easily scaled to accommodate the extra traffic without an impact on our systems, and without having to make any adjustments. In fact, we almost didn’t notice the increase at first.”

For readers flocking to FOCUS Online, CHIP.de, and other sites, reliably fast response times and positive experiences keep them coming back for more. Using Akamai [Dynamic Site Delivery](#), BurdaForward can cache much of its content on the Akamai [content delivery network \(CDN\)](#) – with a 94% cache hit ratio on FOCUS Online’s main page. That offloads traffic from the origin servers, allowing Binder to keep the infrastructure small and rein in costs. No longer scrambling to accommodate traffic spikes, his team can focus on optimizing the performance of uncached content and streamlining software releases as the operations and development teams move toward infrastructure as code.

In addition, Akamai [Adaptive Media Player](#) has helped BurdaForward keep up with rising demand for video, including a growing amount of paid video ads. Seeing the trend as an opportunity to further engage readers, the company has adopted [Akamai Image & Video Manager](#) for even greater delivery speed and quality.



If you’re looking for a content delivery network (CDN), you realize immediately that Akamai is the best, most advanced solution available. At BurdaForward, our reputation is everything, so it’s crucial to work with partners we can trust.

Sebastian Binder

Head of Operations, BurdaForward



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“Video is one of the rising content stars on our websites. During the pandemic, video consumption increased significantly as people viewed our explainer videos on the science of COVID-19,” says Binder. “With Akamai Image & Video Manager, we’ve been able to deliver more videos at greater speed and optimize the content for every device and format.”

BurdaForward also selected Akamai [Global Traffic Management](#) for load balancing among its data centers, preventing a single point of failure to keep websites up and running. Plus, the company chose Akamai [Edge DNS](#) and its Zone Apex Mapping feature to ensure secure access to thousands of subdomains across its brands – FOCUS Online, CHIP.de, NetMoms, Finanzen100, The Weather Channel, BestCheck, cardscout, and EFahrer.com. With millions of visitors every day, the impact on BurdaForward brands is immense.

A platform of products makes it easy to evolve

Binder hadn’t yet joined BurdaForward when the company chose Akamai, but he understands the decision perfectly. “If you’re looking for a content delivery network (CDN), you realize immediately that Akamai is the best, most advanced solution available,” he says. “At BurdaForward, our reputation is everything, so it’s crucial to work with partners we can trust.”

Not only can the company deliver a faster, more reliable experience to customers, it can go to market faster with new features. Operations and development teams are moving toward an infrastructure-as-code approach, automating software deployment, provisioning, and configuration. With a single platform, Binder and his team are making it simple for developers to call on web performance APIs and release code, with standardized workflows and accounts.

That momentum has kept BurdaForward evolving and growing. The launch of BurdaForward Ad Manager allows companies to book ad space and write their own native ad content for publication on the BurdaForward network. The tool allows smaller companies to take advantage of BurdaForward’s broad network of publishers and raise awareness – yet another way the media organization is strengthening its “goodvertising” model. All of it depends on Akamai in some way.

“We have a rule on our team,” says Binder. “When you deliver content to the public, it has to go through Akamai.”



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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. It 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 per year. The company’s website server/back-end infrastructure is managed by a team of 13 that focuses on stability and performance improvements while working hand in hand with large development teams that create sites, applications, and APIs for BurdaForward’s media properties.



Akamai secures and delivers digital experiences for the world’s largest companies. Akamai’s intelligent edge platform surrounds everything, from the enterprise to the cloud, so customers and their businesses can be fast, smart, and secure. Top brands globally rely on Akamai to help them realize competitive advantage through agile solutions that extend the power of their multi-cloud architectures. Akamai keeps decisions, apps, and experiences closer to users than anyone – and attacks and threats far away. Akamai’s portfolio of edge security, web and mobile performance, enterprise access, and video delivery solutions is supported by unmatched customer service, analytics, and 24/7/365 monitoring. To learn why the world’s top brands trust Akamai, visit [www.akamai.com](#), [blogs.akamai.com](#), or [@Akamai](#) on Twitter. You can find our global contact information at [www.akamai.com/locations](#). Published 4/21.