Digital Division Gruppo Espresso (Elemedia SpA) Chooses the Akamai Intelligent Platform as its CDN in a Move Toward Innovation in Publishing

Akamai

> " The choice to continually renew, with the courage to experiment, is key for a publishing group; this has always been our vision. Our decision to entrust Akamai with content distribution and traffic spike management means that we no longer have to worry about the technical aspect and can, therefore, concentrate on giving our very best to our audience online.
>
> — **Luigi Lobello,** CTO of Digital Division Gruppo Espresso (Elemedia S.p.A.)

Elemedia Spa

COMPANY

Elemedia S.p.A.
Rome, Italy
http://www.gruppoespresso.it/en/businesses/digital.html
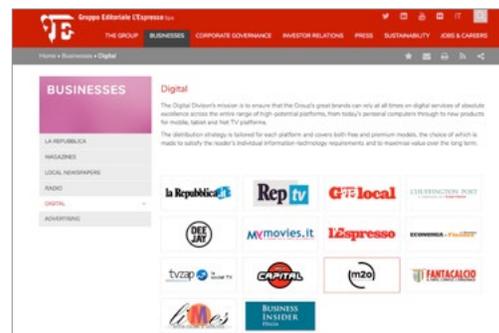
INDUSTRY

Media & Entertainment

SOLUTIONS

- Akamai Ion
- Akamai Media Services Live

KEY IMPACTS

- Fast and reliable delivery of quality online experiences across multiple devices
- Seamless management of different online content: videos and images, HTML pages and static content
- Effective response to unexpected traffic spikes, up to 9 million daily unique users, maintaining 100% availability and without additional infrastructure investment
- Improved performance of digital platforms through the adoption of the HTTP/2 protocol

Background

With more than 2,2 million users logging on every day (source: AWDB) to read the news, listen to the radio and interact with apps, Gruppo Espresso is now one of Italy's leading publishers. Elemedia S.p.A., a subsidiary of Gruppo Espresso, handles all Group digital properties, ensuring absolute excellence of the Group's presence on all platforms accessed by its large online audience, including web, mobile, tablet, smart TV and native apps. The digital properties include the news website Repubblica.it and its 9 local editions, the websites of Gruppo's 13 local newspapers, plus the Repubblica TV platform. In the network are included Huffington Post Italia, MyMovies.it, Tvzap, Limesonline, and the websites and apps of three Italian national radio stations: Radio Deejay, Radio Capital and m2o. In August 2016 alone, almost 5.5 million Facebook users viewed Repubblica content on a mobile device[1].

The Challenge

For some time, Digital Division Gruppo Espresso relied on on-premise technology solutions to share content on its digital platforms. However, the progressive switch to the online fruition showed that their existing solutions were no longer sufficient. Aware of the profound transformation underway in the world of information and entertainment, and determined to prepare for the challenges of the future, Digital Division Gruppo Espresso decided to embark on a major phase of technological transformation. This triggered a complete migration of its digital infrastructure to the cloud.

Taking this as a starting point, Digital Division Gruppo Espresso needed a new way to deliver online content to users on any device, all over Italy, providing optimum performance and better user experience, while managing traffic spikes.

In addition, the publishing company has also gradually begun to deliver more complex traffic and content, reaching up to 150 videos per day, with an exponential increase in live streaming. It now broadcasts live reports, and must handle the increase in consumption of live audio streaming for its three radio stations, which alone account for about 30% of the traffic handled by the entire Group infrastructure.

Engaging online readers with images and videos and anticipating their expectations is key for a publisher dealing with information and news delivery. The differentiator in publishing is the ability to quickly offer new and innovative methods for user engagement. As a result, flexibility in responding to traffic peaks, and delivering content quickly, as well as the ability to test new processes and products on a continuous, rapid release cycle can make a real difference.

The Goals

Elemedia needed to meet the following three key requirements to support its objectives:

- **Effective content delivery.** Elemedia needed to effectively manage the distribution of static and dynamic content, ensuring maximum optimization and performance in its delivery to end users.

Elemedia

- **Managing unexpected traffic peaks.** The organization needed to scale and manage unexpected traffic spikes in real time across the entire infrastructure, mainly due to news stories.

- **HTTP/2 implementation.** Elemedia wanted to take advantage of the superior performance of HTTP/2.

Why Akamai

Meeting Market Challenges Together

Elemedia evaluated numerous commercial solutions, and because it was a long-time Akamai customer, it also assessed Akamai Performance solutions. Elemedia identified Akamai's flagship performance solution, Ion, as best suited to meet the needs for performance, quality, efficiency and reliability of service. Ion proved to answer all of its requirements so the company rolled it out firstly on the Repubblica website to deliver all of its the national and local pages. The next step will be to extend the solution to all other platforms and apps on the network.

Responding to Public Demands

"The ways in which end users access content are changing; therefore, the content itself must also constantly evolve and increase, along with the platforms used to deliver the content. Today, there are infinite ways to tell a story. Until recently, there were no Instant articles, no Facebook Live. In order to keep pace with innovation, Elemedia has exponentially increased its live video production and delivery on its platforms (up to 10 live videos per day)," explains Lobello. Akamai's image optimization technology is designed to enable an optimal viewing experience for images and other static content on a variety of devices and, not least, an optimization of radio streaming audio, implemented also thanks to Akamai's Media Services Live. This is crucial given that users mainly access these from a wide range of different mobile devices.

The decision to break away from the rigidity of an on-premise solution, that was not ready to scale or manage peak traffic, and migrate to the cloud, was not only necessary, but strongly supported by a group whose watchword has always been innovation. "The support of Akamai over the years and now was fundamental to improving the performance level of our sites and providing our users with an outstanding experience," Lobello continues. "Thanks to Akamai's technology, the Group has also achieved its goal of being the first publisher to experiment with the impact of the HTTP/2 protocol and its significantly superior performance compared to HTTP.

Managing Unexpected Spikes in Traffic

The Group mainly covers current affairs, everything from domestic news to big international events and, increasingly, relevant news from abroad. As a result, it is crucial that it delivers content quickly to a huge number of users, without falling victim to traffic spikes. During the tragic events in Nice in summer 2016, more than 8 million users accessed the Group's sites and apps. "Akamai Ion enabled us to handle key events with intense spikes, up to 9 million daily unique users, across the infrastructure without stress on our side" highlights Lobello.

Innovation and Flexibility

Akamai Ion has also provided Elemedia with the opportunity to experiment with new business models and test new features – pay for news stories on a per-article basis, micropayments, combo package of both free and pay articles – without affecting the entire infrastructure or impairing the performance of content delivery on its platforms. "In the publishing world, now more than ever, we are constantly searching for solutions and products to meet the increasing demands of users. As such, the ability to test and experiment without compromising service provision is revolutionary. The decision to migrate to the cloud and, with Akamai's Ion, to leverage on the company's Intelligent Platform, gives the Group a competitive advantage and, thanks to the cloud, enables us to break away from the rigidity of a physical data center," concludes Lobello.

About Elemedia

The Digital Division Gruppo Espresso has the mission to ensure all Group's big brand an absolute excellence of digital presence on all platforms at higher potential, including not only PC but also further and specific product declinations for mobile, tablet and Net TV platforms. The distribution strategy is different from platform to platform and includes both free and premium models: readers' information needs on different platforms and value maximization in the long term drive, time by time, the choice of the most appropriate offer model. For further information visit http://www.gruppoespresso.it/

Akamai **FASTER FORWARD**

As the global leader in Content Delivery Network (CDN) services, Akamai makes the Internet fast, reliable, and secure for its customers. The company's advanced web performance, mobile performance, cloud security, and media delivery solutions are revolutionizing how businesses optimize consumer, enterprise, and entertainment experiences for any device, anywhere. To learn how Akamai solutions and its team of Internet experts are helping businesses move faster forward, please visit www.akamai.com or blogs.akamai.com, and follow @Akamai on Twitter.

Akamai is headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the United States with operations in more than 57 offices around the world. Our services and renowned customer care are designed to enable businesses to provide an unparalleled Internet experience for their customers worldwide. Addresses, phone numbers, and contact information for all locations are listed on www.akamai.com/locations.