

## AKAMAI CUSTOMER STORY

# Im Achieves Zero Trust Security with Akamai

Leading beauty and health company enables secure, easy-to-use remote access for employees



Moved to a Zero Trust security architecture



Eliminated VPN access and delivered secure remote application access



Enabled secure FIDO2 multi-factor authentication

## A pioneer in delivering beauty and health products

A provider of beauty and health aids worldwide, Im Co., Ltd. (Im) creates industry-leading skincare products based on advanced research and scientific evidence. Im's three uniquely formulated product brands include RICE FORCE moisturizer, Brightage whitener, and Regain Triple Force tablets.

Im pioneered internet sales within the beauty industry starting with its RICE FORCE business in 2000. After becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of Daiichi Sankyo, Co., Ltd. in 2015, Im added pharmaceutical sales. As RICE FORCE approached its 20th anniversary in 2019, with customers in Japan and 50 other countries worldwide, Im unveiled an initiative to enhance the line by growing the rice used in its products.

## Akamai security solutions support a new, safe workstyle

As a company that sells its products online, Im makes efficient use of advanced information and communications technology (ICT), while at the same time actively creating an environment that allows employees to work remotely. Akamai's security solutions act as the infrastructure that enables the safe and efficient execution of business operations.

"The spread of coronavirus created a situation in which operators could not come to work at the call center — an essential part of our organization that carries out mail order sales. To maintain call center operations and customer satisfaction, we provided PCs to home-based employees for remote access. This initiative became a major reason behind the introduction of Enterprise Application Access," recalls Naoki Ono, Corporate Officer at Im's ICT Solutions Department.



**Im Co., Ltd.**  
Kagawa, Japan  
im-co.co.jp

**Industry**  
Retail and Consumer Goods

**Solutions**  
• [Enterprise Application Access](#)  
• [Akamai MFA](#)  
• [Secure Internet Access](#)



With branches in both Kagawa Prefecture and Tokyo, Im has dealt with the frequent onboarding and offboarding of employees between the two locations — even before COVID-19. It developed a VPN and a remote desktop environment in anticipation of difficulties in traveling due to events like the Olympics.

However, alongside the expansion of remote work, Im frequently encountered issues with unstable VPN connections and malfunctioning computer equipment when using remote desktops. Furthermore, as the communication lines for remote access could only be routed through smartphones (tethering) because of security considerations, this led to operational delays caused by the unstable configuration.

Upon searching for a reliable means of solving this dilemma, Im welcomed a proposal for [Enterprise Application Access](#) from Akamai. Enterprise Application Access serves as a cloud-based proxy for ID authentication, allowing for safe remote access regardless of location. Once accessed and undertaking a strict security screening, users gain authorization according to their ID. In comparison with VPN and remote desktops, this system decreases a corporation's security risk by limiting the range of access.

Im initially introduced a remote access environment with Enterprise Application Access for approximately 90 employees — giving employees who conduct standard remote work, as well as operators involved in call center operations, the ability to work from their homes.

"By adopting Enterprise Application Access, we are now able to enjoy the safe and stable use of remote desktops through an internet connection," says Ono. "We have received a lot of feedback from employees, including executives, stating that this has added convenience and boosted productivity. Enterprise Application Access can also link with Active Directory, so it is not necessary to manage the user database separately, meaning there is almost no operational burden."

## Adopting advanced multi-factor authentication

Combined with the introduction of Enterprise Application Access, Im also adopted a multi-factor authentication environment using [Akamai MFA](#) to further minimize the risk of employee accounts being compromised.

According to the [FIDO Alliance](#), which promotes the development and propagation of technical specifications for online authentication, there are many users who generally use the same authentication passwords, which can lead to account takeover.

Although Enterprise Application Access supports standard multi-factor authentication, Akamai MFA conforms with FIDO2, the latest authentication technology promoted by the FIDO alliance. The solution allows secure push notification-based multi-factor authentication using a smartphone app. Ono praises the strong, simple authentication that doesn't require the use of additional equipment, such as dedicated hardware security keys, as the company's reason for adopting this solution.

"We used smartphones that were already distributed by the company, so there was no need to issue security keys. That allowed us to roll out multi-factor authentication for the majority of users in a short time," says Ono.



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**Naoki Ono**

Corporate Officer,  
ICT Solutions Department,  
Im

## Achieving Zero Trust security

Im introduced [Secure Internet Access](#) throughout the company as part of its exit-point measures. This security solution provides protection in the cloud when a user tries to connect to a malicious website that could be hosting malware, phishing, or the like. It is being used to protect approximately 350 devices, including in-house PCs used by 140 employees and the devices they take home for remote work, as well as the systems used at the logistics and call centers.

“Akamai helped us understand the importance of having Zero Trust security that carries out inspections without trusting connections to internet-based services, as well as all connections to in-house work applications,” explains Ono.

Secure Internet Access is equipped with threat intelligence based on the global, up-to-date, and cutting-edge knowledge unique to Akamai. Strong zero-day detection capabilities provided by advanced malware detection engines provide additional protection, and data loss prevention prevents the uploading of company-sensitive information. Im appreciates this reassurance as well as the option to configure detailed policy settings according to the company’s acceptable use policy.

## Supporting business growth online

Ono holds the support provided by Akamai in very high regard. Everything from the proposal and proof of concept to implementation and operation was done well. Im is now considering additional protection for servers and cloud services, including web applications and APIs.

“Although our company was already using Akamai’s web performance solutions, its security solutions have now become essential to our infrastructure operations. Because we can manage and operate these solutions in a unified manner, we can streamline costs and management loads,” says Ono. “In addition to further increasing service functionality, as well as reliability and performance from here forward, we are also anticipating that Akamai will provide new solutions and services that will enable us to continue growing our online sales.”



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ICT Solutions Department,  
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Im provides a lineup of brands that enhances customers’ beauty and health. With the hope of bringing happiness and inspiration to the world, the company delivers beauty and health in Japan and overseas through mail order sales — making use of Japan’s unique materials and manufacturing technology, as well as service skills. In addition to launching RICE FORCE, a long-selling series created in 2000, Im has engaged in cooperation with Daiichi Sankyo Healthcare Co., Ltd. to produce Brightage, a skincare brand combining the fruits of the pharmaceutical company’s research and technology, as well as Regain Triple Force, a designated quasi-drug representing the ultimate product in the Regain Series. <https://im-co.co.jp/>