Princess Cruises turns to Akamai for site optimization

> " I think the DPC changes we worked hard on in the last few weeks have helped. We had 200% more traffic consistently throughout the day. Offload averaged at 87%.
>
> — **Jubil Sason,** Project Lead, Holland America Group

Carnival Corporation & PLC is the world's largest leisure travel company, providing millions of passengers around the globe with amazing travel opportunities and vacation packages. Carnival's global cruise line brands include Holland America Line, Princess Cruises, Seabourn, and many more. Carnival has leveraged Akamai to keep up with its growing customer base and the resulting increase in site traffic.

Princess Cruises Breaks Sales Record with Akamai's Help

In 2016, the team at Princess Cruises — a major cruise line in the Carnival Group — was looking to gain more customer traffic, increase direct bookings, and improve its overall site performance. With ongoing investments in web and email marketing, site speed and user experience are top priorities to maximize effectiveness of Princess Cruises' promotions. Since Princess Cruises already had an existing engagement with Akamai Services and Support, the Princess Cruises team requested consulting services to assist in meeting their high-priority business goals.

A dedicated team of Professional Service experts scoped the project, with the goal of improving caching and site offload in an effort to increase bookings on Princess.com. The Akamai Professional Services team framework, delivery timeline, and technical expertise offered the Princess Cruises team key areas for optimization of Princess.com. The team mapped out areas of improvement within their Akamai setup and a roadmap with recommendations to adjust site architecture to further meet their business goals.

Primary Business Objectives

- **Improve site performance:** Continuously tune and optimize the Princess.com site architecture to support site speed and improve offload rate

- **Increase customer traffic:** Meet and exceed end-user expectations by delivering fast, quality experiences

- **Maximize value and minimize risk:** Increase bookings directly correlated with Princess Cruises' promotions to support reach and conversion

Akamai's Expertise Guides Princess Cruises to a Win

Princess Cruises anticipated a significant uptick in site traffic as a result of its "$1 Cruise Deposit Sale." Princess Cruises runs a variety of campaigns like this annually, but in 2016 it saw an opportunity to improve its CPU usage based on the findings from an Akamai assessment.

Princess Cruises

A key finding in the Akamai assessment highlighted that Princess.com was encountering issues using the "Expires Tag" configuration. With the impending campaign approaching, the team at Princess Cruises was rushing to find opportunities that would improve the site offload rate. Princess Cruises' dedicated team of professional service experts at Akamai was able to dig into the existing architecture of Princess.com and enable Dynamic Page Caching to dramatically improve site performance. As a component of the project, the Akamai team also dug into the web app server logic to debug the Princess.com CORS logic by analyzing its web app server logic.

Strategic Goal	Previous Approach	After Partnering with Akamai
Improve site performance	Existing site architecture limited the Princess.com IT team's ability to implement optimizations	Reduced origin/app server load for all incoming requests by testing and implementing improved caching rules, resulting in an improved offload rate to an average of 87%
Increase customer traffic	Average maximum of 9,000 requests per minute	Increased number of requests to an average of 16,000 per minute, which led to a 10x increase in direct bookings
Establish a holistic approach to maximize value and minimize risk	Limited return on manual site optimization efforts to impact bookings	Ongoing support from Akamai experts to improve server logic and optimize Akamai metadata settings

Business Outcomes

- **Improved site performance:** Princess.com's offload rate improved to an average of 87% and CPU usage was lowered from 30-35% to 20-25%

- **Increased customer traffic:** 200% average increase in Princess.com traffic

- **Maximized value and minimized risk:** Direct bookings via Princess.com increased by 10x the average daily bookings rate and 2x its previous record-breaking day

Performance is everything

During the "$1 Cruise Deposit Sale" campaign, Princess.com saw a 200% average increase in site traffic. Akamai was able to successfully offload some of the static Princess.com caching to the Akamai Intelligent PlatformTM, reducing the origin server load for all incoming requests. These optimizations improved offload rate to an average of 87%. More importantly, this resulted in a record-breaking day for bookings via Princess.com, closing 10x the average daily bookings rate and 2x its previous record-breaking day. The Akamai Services and Support team helped achieve this online success by ensuring a secure end-to-end user experience during Princess.com's largest annual campaign.

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