

## AKAMAI CUSTOMER STORY

# Delivering Dining Experiences That Bring Smiles to Customers' Faces

Skylark Group helps restaurant employees focus on great customer service by simplifying application access with Akamai



8

Apps accessible on 4,500 devices in 3,000+ restaurants



Helps employees focus on delivering better customer service



Tightens security with a cloud-based Zero Trust model

## Technology serving employees, employees serving customers

Skylark Group relies on IT to keep restaurants running smoothly, and it selected Akamai Enterprise Application Access to keep access to essential enterprise applications simple and safe. Using smartphones and Enterprise Application Access, Skylark successfully increased administrative efficiency for store managers, giving them more time to focus on delivering quality customer service.

### Family restaurants with a mission to make customers happy

Skylark Group measures its success by the smiles of its customers – always striving to exceed customer expectations with great-tasting food, affordable prices, excellent service, and clean restaurants. Its strong commitment to the customer experience has fueled its growth over the past 50 years, turning Skylark into one of the largest food chains in Japan. The company has more than 3,000 restaurants in every prefecture of the country, and its 27 brands specialize in everything from sushi and tempura to Western-style dishes and pasta.

With 400 million people eating at Skylark restaurants every year, ensuring customer satisfaction is no small task. It takes dedication on the part of every employee, from company leaders to restaurant employees – and even IT. Indeed, the IT division has an important responsibility when it comes to the overall dining experience. If systems are slow or unavailable, it can make work difficult and frustrating for employees – and that can make it hard to deliver fast, friendly customer service.



**Skylark Group**

Skylark Group  
Tokyo, Japan  
[www.skylark.co.jp](http://www.skylark.co.jp)

**Industry**  
Food

**Challenge**  
Skylark Group wanted to help restaurant managers spend less time sitting at their desks doing administrative work – and more time delivering exceptional customer service – by providing a simple and secure way to expand access for back-end systems to 3,800 smartphones.

**Solution**  
• [Enterprise Application Access](#)



"We are always thinking about how to create a good experience for our customers," says Mr. Hideki Nakajima, director of the IT support group in the IT department at Skylark. "Our job is to keep IT systems stable and easy to use, so employees can work comfortably and serve customers with courtesy and speed."

To stay modern and efficient, Skylark rolled out 3,800 smartphones to store managers across the country. They can complete administrative work even when away from their offices, which increases the amount of time they can spend on customer service. These smartphones needed secure access to back-end systems, meaning that Skylark needed a new approach to providing digital access.

"We have more smart technologies and mobile devices in our restaurants than ever before – and on the back end, we're increasingly moving to Google Workspace and other cloud systems," says Mr. Yukihiro Yamada of the IT infrastructure team in the IT department at Skylark. "Given the growing complexity and sophistication in our IT environment, we needed a way to manage it all with greater simplicity and security."

## **A dining experience customers can enjoy, supported by Akamai**

As Skylark looked for a Zero Trust Network Access solution, it considered a few leading providers. Only one met the company's high standards for simplicity, security, and stability.

"We chose Akamai because it has been around for many years, with a strong track record of success," says Mr. Nakajima. "Akamai [Enterprise Application Access](#) supports our cloud-native strategy and helps us pursue a Zero Trust security approach – so we can provide modern technology in our restaurants while keeping access to applications and data secure."

Today, Akamai is the standard for more than 3,000 Skylark restaurants, providing centralized, cloud-based access management for 8 applications on 4,500 devices. That includes 3,800 Android smartphones for restaurant managers and 700 Android tablets used to access a variety of administrative applications. With Enterprise Application Access, users no longer need to download VPN client software, keep the application updated, or remember login information to connect to a VPN. This dramatically reduces effort for the user to access administrative applications. With Akamai and a third-party identity provider (IdP) for authentication, access to core applications is now entirely cloud-based, which also improves IT efficiency and security.

For customer service, keeping things simple for employees is key. "Employees already have a lot of responsibilities to manage throughout their shifts. Technology should help, not hinder, their ability to do their job – and do it well," says Mr. Nakajima. "Akamai provides fast, stable access to applications without extra steps, so employees don't even notice it's there."

## **Simple and secure – IT's supporting role in customer satisfaction**

Security is just as important as the customer experience, and Akamai has gone a long way toward safeguarding Skylark's enterprise applications. In the past, each device had a single VPN account and password. Access was granted using the internal ID directory and VPN account as dual layers of security, which increased management costs while still posing potential security risks. Skylark shifted to a Zero Trust model with Akamai and the third-party IdP, allowing IT to control access to back-end apps through unified ID management.

"Akamai provides group access controls, so we can grant different access levels to different employees without managing each account individually," says Mr. Yamada. "Now we can guard against unauthorized access that may have happened without us knowing in the past."

Plus, Skylark can now manage application access from a growing number of mobile devices on a single platform. That helps IT avoid a lot of headaches – and keeps restaurants from experiencing downtime and delays.

"Unlike VPN, Akamai Enterprise Application Access doesn't require client software, which saves us from having to manage issues associated with software updates," says Mr. Yamada.

## Skylark is poised for growth in the cloud

Not only does Enterprise Application Access provide secure access to cloud applications, it has also given Skylark confidence that it can scale over time. The company plans to continue expanding its popular restaurant chains and rolling out new devices – delivering the modern, efficient customer experiences Skylark restaurants are known for. By making work easier for restaurant managers and employees, the IT division is directly contributing to the mission at Skylark – exceeding customer expectations and making them smile.



Skylark Group opened its first casual dining restaurant in 1970, and today it has grown to more than 3,000 restaurants across Japan in more than 20 diverse lines of business, including Japanese, Western, Chinese, Italian, sushi, and shabu-shabu restaurants. With the corporate philosophy of "Creating Richness with Value to Society," Skylark continually plans new services, products, and spaces for modern needs. Through digital transformation, Skylark aims to improve customer satisfaction and create a good working environment for employees.



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](http://www.akamai.com), [blogs.akamai.com](http://blogs.akamai.com), or [@Akamai](https://twitter.com/Akamai) on Twitter. You can find our global contact information at [www.akamai.com/locations](http://www.akamai.com/locations). Published 4/21.