Becoming the World's No. 1 Medical Group

Enhancing website performance and security is critical to the success of SBC Medical Group's digital strategy

Enhanced website performance and security

Prompt rollout of new services in conjunction with a refresh of 11 websites

Reduction in operational burdens through integration and automation

Leveraging the power of IT to provide customers with the best experience

SBC Medical Group has its origin in Shonan Beauty Clinic, which opened in Fujisawa City, Kanagawa Prefecture, in 2000. The group boasts outstanding name recognition and scale through its aesthetic medicine clinics, which support more than 2 million visitors a year. In recent years, the group has focused on medical treatments that are and are not covered by medical insurance. It is now a comprehensive medical group that provides a variety of medical services, including general internal medicine, surgery, dentistry, and urology. SBC Medical Group operates 109 clinics nationwide, making it one of the largest clinics in Japan.

Continuing its growth with the goal of becoming the number one medical group in the world, SBC Medical Group's motto is "Ultimate Win-Win-Win." For example, the clinic aims to "make customers happy, give staff the feeling of pride and satisfaction in their work, and contribute to society in a positive way."

"The management is now investing in digital strategies. The Information Systems Department is taking the lead in introducing advanced technologies and developing the best IT environment in the aesthetic medicine industry in Japan," says Hitohiko Sato, Manager of the Information Strategy Office at SBC Medical Group. "We are also promoting initiatives to provide a high quality user experience by utilizing customer data collected through IT. Since we handle a lot of private customer information, we need to take all possible security measures."

Focusing on service stability and simple operation of advanced functions

SBC Medical Group's website is one of the most important points of contact with customers, but with the growth of the business, the server load had become a challenge. For instance, when a television program reported on the group's medical services, it led to a surge in website visits. As a result, some of the databases malfunctioned. To solve this problem, the group started evaluating migration of their CDN services, with the aim of further improving the user experience and enhancing security.

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SBC Medical Group

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Industry
Healthcare and Life Sciences

Solutions
• Image & Video Manager
• Ion
• Kona Site Defender
• mPulse
• Web Application Protector

Akamai

"In addition to improving stability during increased access to our site, we needed a solution that could collectively protect our origin servers, which are distributed across multiple locations, from cyberattacks," recalls Yusaku Sakiyama of the Information Systems Department at SBC Medical Group. "After careful consideration, we chose Akamai because of its high level of security with simple operation, 100% availability SLA, excellent stability, and extensive deployment experience in Japan. I also like the GUI localized in Japanese, which makes it easier to use."

Enabling stress-free browsing of site information

SBC Medical Group's website is characterized by the provision of information about and examples of patient procedures, as well as the extensive use of images for its beauty-related content. To improve the page loading speed without losing the quality of finely detailed photos of skin and other images, Image & Video Manager was implemented.

"It is important that new customers who come through digital channels due to the influence of social networking sites, can browse information with images of the services we offer, without stress," says Sakiyama. "What surprised us when we used Image & Video Manager, was not only that it compresses images without compromising their perceptible quality and delivers them at the optimal image size for the user's device, but also that it is so easy to use, automating the entire workflow for image processing and management within the site. The operations have become so simple."

Further, the group plans to utilize mPulse to analyze the real user performance evaluation values to continue to improve the experience and make it a preferred website.

Understanding advanced security insight — easily and clearly

The SBC Medical Group, which handles many aesthetic treatments, retains a great deal of private data in addition to names and contact information. To prevent leaks, the best security measures must be in place. A web application firewall (WAF) is a particularly effective solution to combat attacks on web applications that can lead to massive information leaks.

"With a WAF, when a new server vulnerability is discovered, virtual patches can be applied without stopping the web server, reducing pressure in the maintenance schedule," says Sakiyama. "We felt that Akamai's cloud-based WAF was the best way to collectively protect our distributed web servers."

Knowing that operating a WAF requires specialized security skills and time-consuming tuning, the group chose Web Application Protector. With this solution, complex WAF detection rules are bundled into eight groups, and each group can easily be configured and operated by simply selecting an action such as monitor, alert, or block (deny). The rules within the eight groups are based on Akamai's unique know-how, which protects well-known sites around the world, and are constantly and automatically tuned for a high level of accuracy to prevent false positive detections.

In addition, Akamai's high-end WAF, Kona Site Defender, features the DDoS resistance and performance nondegradation that the SBC Medical Group — which values service stability and user experience — was looking for.

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Yusaku Sakiyama
Information Systems Department, SBC Medical Group

"Web Application Protector's GUI-based reports are very easy to understand, providing details of detected attack behaviors, risk scores, and even advice on blocking attacks. You can easily understand what you need to focus on, even with limited advanced knowledge of security, so it was very easy to proceed with the configuration process when moving from the monitoring mode to full deployment," says Sakiyama. "In addition, you can check the dashboard in your daily operations to get a quick overview of the situation to see if any attacks or new risks are occurring. Akamai's solutions are generally easy to use, but Web Application Protector has a particularly clear design that makes it simple for anyone to run a high level of web security."

Focusing on the customer experience to become a trusted web service

While refreshing the site, SBC Medical Group implemented solutions, such as Ion, to optimize and continuously manage the performance on their 11 sites. These solutions were implemented within just two months of the decision to introduce them. Two months later, Web Application Protector was fully deployed, and security was enhanced.

SBC Medical Group plans to continue applying Akamai's solutions to services with an emphasis on security and performance, and to launch services that users can use with peace of mind.

"We are also focusing on digital marketing, which will further increase the number of visitors and traffic to our site," says Sato. "We will continue to maintain and improve performance and security in order to provide a comfortable and secure user experience. We also use Akamai's solutions for our employees to work remotely and feel that Akamai is an important partner in supporting our overall business."

The SBC Medical Group intends to continue to invest aggressively in IT, not only to introduce cutting-edge technologies but also to secure talented resources who can make full use of it. By providing a secure digital experience with a high level of customer satisfaction, they are sure to move toward their goal of becoming the "World's Number One Medical Group."

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Manager of the Information Strategy Office, SBC Medical Group

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SBC Medical Group

The group has its origin in Shonan Beauty Clinic, which opened 2000, offering a wide range of medical services, including aesthetic medicine, dentistry, fertility treatment, regenerative medicine, and immunotherapy. With a total of 109 clinics in the group and more than 2 million visitors per year, it is one of the top companies in Japan for aesthetic medicine. With the goal of becoming the "World's Number One Medical Group" as a comprehensive medical group in the future, they are also working to strengthen their digital strategy. https://www.sbc-med.com