



CASE STUDY

SPICEWORKS™
IT'S EVERYTHING IT

At a Glance

COMPANY: Spiceworks

FOUNDED: 2006

HEADQUARTERS: Austin, TX

AUDIENCE: Small and Mid-Sized
Businesses

INDUSTRY: Software and Technology

WEBSITE: www.spiceworks.com

SERVICES: Free network
management/helpdesk software and
online community for IT professionals

CDNetworks SERVICES:
Content Acceleration
SSL Acceleration

Key Results

Reduced global page load times
by 75%

Saved 40% each month on ongoing
website hosting costs

Overwhelmingly positive feedback
from a user audience that is growing
exponentially each year

Spiceworks Improves International Website Performance, Increasing Site Stickiness and Maximizing Ad Revenue

"CDNetworks has made a tremendous difference in website performance for our international users. One user told us that he felt as though we were delivering our site from right next door."

Francis Sullivan, CTO and co-founder, Spiceworks

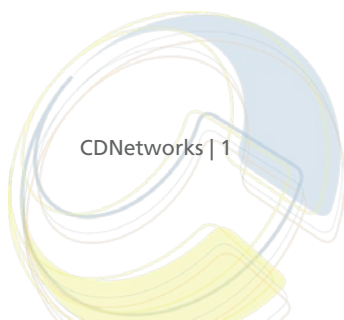
Can IT be made as simple as iTunes? That's the goal of Spiceworks, which has created a first-of-its-kind free desktop IT management application combined with an online community in which users collaborate to solve common IT problems and share information. The IT management application and online community combination was developed to make it easier for small and medium-sized businesses to manage everything related to IT. In less than five years, more than 1.2 million IT professionals have adopted the Spiceworks community and application, which includes network management and helpdesk software. Equally important, the social collaboration features of the Spiceworks community provide members with much-needed support and information exchanges that help them keep their IT running effectively and efficiently — without breaking the bank.

The Challenge

Spiceworks strives to keep both its desktop software and online community free, and as a result, relies on a completely ad-driven business model. The more interaction users have in the Spiceworks online community and integrated desktop application, the more ad revenue the company generates. This has led Spiceworks to maintain a laser focus on the online community user experience, with the Spiceworks team continuously implementing best-in-class technologies and techniques to ensure an optimal user experience for its growing online membership. The strategy has worked so well that the community site enjoys exponential growth every year and an increasingly international user base that includes 40% of its members.

INTERNET LATENCY OVER LONG DISTANCES AFFECTS INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS

Spiceworks has always hosted its website from a single data center location in Austin, Texas. While this arrangement was cost-effective for serving the domestic



Spiceworks audience, Spiceworks began to notice that international users were spending less time than domestic users in the community. But it wasn't until the Spiceworks management team gave a presentation in Europe that they realized the cause behind their website's differing usage levels between foreign and domestic users.

"In Europe, our site pages took forever to load," explains Francis Sullivan, CTO and co-founder of Spiceworks. "This surprised us because we had already optimized our application and our community site's back-end infrastructure for speed."

Spiceworks management quickly realized that Internet latency was affecting their business and that they needed to deliver community site content from locations that are closer to their international users. "Even though we had optimized our application, the fact is that latency is latency regardless of the speed of the back-end code," continues Sullivan.

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FOCUSING ON THE USER EXPERIENCE

With a limited number of engineering resources, Spiceworks recognized that building out its own data centers internationally was not an option. Moreover, Europe was not the only region to experience the community site performance problems. In Australia, for example, the Spiceworks community site would frequently deliver outdated content. That's because Telstra, Australia's largest network provider, utilizes unusual and unpredictable content caching mechanisms.

"We needed to address our regional Internet issues. Even if our application and community are robust and well received, users won't bother with them if they take too long to access," says Sullivan. "It's the community feature-functionality that keeps member loyalty high."

Key Objectives

To improve the delivery speed of its dynamic online community's content and advertising, the Spiceworks team sought the help of a content delivery network (CDN) service provider that could speed page load times globally and cost-effectively.

As Spiceworks evaluated CDN solutions, it focused on two areas that were impacting the international user experience. First, the CDN provider would need to deliver content quickly to all regions of the world, and this meant having a global delivery infrastructure that made it possible to optimize performance locally. Second, the CDN provider would need to demonstrate the ability to accelerate SSL. This was important because Spiceworks delivers its application and community content over SSL to eliminate security pop-up warnings that slow the user experience.



The Solution: Content and SSL Acceleration

After evaluating the capabilities and pricing of several CDNs, Spiceworks decided that CDNetworks could best help the company improve the user experience around the world while staying within its infrastructure budget.

“As far as we’re concerned, we’re still a start-up, so affordability was an important factor,” explains Sullivan.

DRAMATICALLY IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND CUTTING COSTS

The combined Content and SSL Acceleration services provided by CDNetworks save Spiceworks 40% on overall site delivery. But, according to Sullivan, the savings are not the biggest part of the story. “CDNetworks has made a tremendous difference

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Today, thanks to a 75% performance improvement, international members of the Spiceworks community have grown their site usage to match that of U.S.-based members. The end result: Spiceworks’ advertising revenue, the lifeblood of the company, continues to grow in step with the site’s global member community.

And Spiceworks is well positioned to support that growth. “With CDNetworks, we don’t have to worry about the costs to scale. The services scale on demand as needed, freeing us from adding servers every month or two just for content delivery,” says Sullivan.

GAINING NEW INSIGHTS WITH ROBUST REPORTING

Spiceworks is leveraging the reporting capabilities inherent in the CDNetworks Content Acceleration and SSL Acceleration solutions. These help the company understand who is visiting the Spiceworks community site, where they come from, and how the site is being used in real time. Being able to view this data through an advanced user interface makes it much easier to monitor our community and plan our budget for content delivery,” explains Sullivan.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

An ancillary benefit of using CDNetworks’ services is that Spiceworks can center its attention on its core competencies. “We want our engineers focused on developing new and valuable application and community features instead of over-optimizing our web infrastructure,” says Sullivan.

Thrilled with the positive results it has seen to date, Spiceworks plans to take further advantage of CDNetworks’ capabilities. “We continue to identify additional content we can accelerate, including video and the business logic in our application. It’s incredibly valuable to work with a CDN provider that can improve the delivery of all our content,” concludes Sullivan.



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About Spiceworks

Founded in 2006, [Spiceworks](http://www.spiceworks.com)™ develops the first free social IT management application that combines [network management](#) and [help desk software](#) with a Facebook-like online community of IT professionals to help over 1.2 million IT pros and 150,000 IT service providers simplify everything IT. Spiceworks makes it easy for businesses to manage IT products and services on-premise or in the cloud, collaborate to solve technology problems, and find the IT knowledge and products they need day-to-day. Through its Voice of IT® market research program, the company enables direct conversations with IT professionals, conducts surveys and provides insight on important technology usage, staffing and purchasing trends by small and medium businesses worldwide. Spiceworks is a privately held company headquartered in Austin, Texas with funding from Institutional Venture Partners (IVP), Austin Ventures and Shasta Ventures. For more information visit <http://www.spiceworks.com>.

About CDNetworks

CDNetworks enables mission critical e-business in the world's most challenging markets. CDNetworks' unique position as the only multinational CDN with expertise and infrastructure in China, and other emerging markets, makes us a trusted technology and business advisor to more than 1,200 companies across the highly-competitive industries of software, travel, eCommerce, high tech, manufacturing, media, and gaming. Reliably delivering over-the-top performance anywhere in the world, CDNetworks helps businesses get closer to their end users without the limitations of hardware and private networks. Founded in 2000, CDNetworks has offices in the U.S., Korea, China, Europe, and Japan. For more information, please visit: www.cdnetworks.com

