

## The Onion Maximizes Advertising Inventory by Improving Site Performance 50% and Eliminating Site Downtime



### At a Glance

**COMPANY:** The Onion

**FOUNDED:** 1988

**HEADQUARTERS:** New York, NY

**AUDIENCE:** Online consumers

**INDUSTRY:** Media & Entertainment

**WEBSITE:** www.theonion.com

**SERVICES:** Online and print media

**CDNetworks SERVICES:**  
Content Acceleration, Video-On-Demand

### Key Results

Improved website download performance by 50%

Achieved 100% website uptime

Increased advertising inventory

Reduced provisioning of new site features from two days to two hours

“Being fast and reliable is critical, and CDNetworks helps us predictably deliver more than 30 million page views per month, increasing our inventory for advertising revenue.”

Michael Greer, Vice President of Product, The Onion

Launched in 1988, The Onion has been entertaining readers with satirical news coverage for more than two decades. Starting in 2006, The Onion made a concerted effort to establish www.TheOnion.com as its main media outlet. With heavy promotion and the 2007 launch of its online video series, TheOnion.com site quickly grew in popularity and has transformed the company. Today, the site serves award-winning news, videos, and 40-million page views to more than 8 million unique visitors each month, making it the most popular news organization in its class.

Thanks to its ability to continuously deliver fresh news and views in new and interesting ways, The Onion has developed a loyal subscriber base, which plays a key role in spreading the word about ‘America’s Finest News Source.’ “Our website is a platform for our advertising partners,” says Michael Greer, The Onion’s VP of Product. “So we have to continue to entertain our audience and provide them with the best user experience possible.”

The Onion team recognizes that the hyper-competitive nature of the web means that media companies must continuously seek new ways to keep their audience’s attention. To maintain its strong industry leadership position, The Onion’s marketing and IT professionals frequently collaborate to test new content ideas and site features.

### The Challenge

In 2006, fast growth in subscribers and site visits began to strain The Onion’s infrastructure. As a result, its site was down a significant amount of the time. Moreover, the downtime periods were highly unpredictable. This combination of downtime and unpredictability drastically reduced The Onion’s ability to sell ad inventory, hurting both business planning and revenue. “As an ad-supported site, downtime was having a horrible effect,” recalls Greer. He knew that his team had to quickly shore up its website delivery infrastructure or risk losing the customer

loyalty – and ad revenue – it had worked so hard to build. The Onion began leveraging the services of two content delivery networks (CDNs). The primary CDN focused on fast, reliable delivery of the site’s core content of news and reviews. The secondary CDN, CDNetworks, provided fast video-on-demand delivery along with core content delivery backup in the event of a primary CDN outage. Having two CDNs seemed like a foolproof strategy, but The Onion experienced problems with the primary CDN. Recalls Greer, “It took up to two days to provision new services and site features through our primary CDN provider.”

The primary CDN also caused a site outage, and its help desk staff lacked the highly qualified engineers needed to quickly bring The Onion’s site up again. This could have severely damaged The Onion’s brand just as it was gaining popularity. Fortunately for The Onion, it had already arranged for failover to CDNetworks, so it was able to minimize the outage’s impact. Still, problems with the primary CDN led The Onion to investigate each CDN’s status and responsibilities going forward.

### Key Objectives

Having learned a lot about CDNs and the value of advanced features and support, The Onion evaluated its options. It still maintained its laser focus on site uptime and performance. But new insights into ancillary CDN features led The Onion to include three other key criteria: availability of self-provisioning to streamline testing of new services and architecture; a simple UI to make administration of

CDN services faster; and frontline support from experienced site engineers to minimize downtime in the event of a site outage.

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### The Solution: Choosing a New Primary CDN

Having already worked closely with CDNetworks as its secondary CDN provider, The Onion IT team knew that CDNetworks could satisfy all its functional requirements. And having witnessed the CDN’s performance for whole site delivery, it decided to assign primary CDN responsibilities to CDNetworks.

Since switching to CDNetworks, The Onion has experienced 100% website uptime and 50% performance gains, including average page download time of 75 milliseconds. “Being fast and reliable is critical, and CDNetworks helps us predictably deliver more than 30 million page views per month, which in turn allows us to increase our inventory for advertising revenue,” adds Greer. “But it’s also all the little things that make a difference. CDNetworks proactively raises potential site issues. We interface with senior engineers who are true subject matter experts. The company is constantly innovating technology and adding features. And its instant self-provisioning tool has made our lives so much easier.” In fact, CDNetworks’ tool has reduced The Onion’s average provisioning time from two days down to just two hours.



## CDNetworks Global Offices

### US

441 W. Trimble Road  
San Jose, CA 95131  
+1 408 228 3700

### EMEA

Juxon House, 100 St Paul's Churchyard  
London, EC4M 8BU  
+44 (0) 203 102 7325

### Korea

Handong Bldg. 2F, 828-7  
Yeoksam-Dong, Gangnam-Gu  
135-935 Seoul  
+82 2 3441 0400

### Japan

Nittochi Nishi-shinjuku Building  
8th Floor, 6-10-1, Nishishinjuku,  
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0023  
+81 3 5909 3369

### China

Room No.A-1502,  
Keijidalou, 900 Yi shan Road, Shanghai  
+86 10 8441 7749

[info@cdnetworks.com](mailto:info@cdnetworks.com)  
[www.cdnetworks.com](http://www.cdnetworks.com)

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## GROWING VIDEO-BASED REVENUE

Just as The Onion was making the switch to CDNetworks as its sole CDN provider, it also began evaluating a major investment in expanded video offerings. "We knew that our ability to grow video offerings would depend on our confidence in CDNetworks," says Greer. As a result of CDNetworks delivering more than two years of 100% uptime, The Onion is now planning major additions to its site's video lineup. Concludes Greer, "Partnering with a reliable CDN provider enables us to move forward with confidence."

## About The Onion

The Onion offers award-winning news and views that readers can't get anywhere else. Our attention grabbing headlines and photojournalism paint a unique picture of the world. More than 4 million people read the Onion each week and listen to Onion Radio News, making it by far the most popular news organization in its class. In 2007, the Onion launched Onion News Network, its 24-hour video news network.

## 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](http://www.cdnetworks.com)

