RAIL EUROPE™

CDNetworks puts Rail Europe websites on the fast track

Interview with Frédéric Herbeaux, Information System Manager, Rail Europe 4A

At a Glance

Company	|	Rail Europe 4A
Headquarters	|	Paris, France
Industry	|	Transport
CDN Services	|	Content Acceleration

Key Results

+ No more frozen pages

+ Website users get nearly the same response time and performance from anywhere in the world

+ Rail Europe can design websites optimized for tablets and smartphones

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Tell us a little bit about Rail Europe 4A and the website challenges you face?

Rail Europe 4A operates websites that let people living outside Europe and North America book train tickets for any European destination, regardless of the different rail companies that may be involved (Rail Europe Inc. serves travelers in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada from its offices in New York and Chicago). Our company was created in 1995 through a joint initiative by the Swiss and French railway operators.

Figure 1. Rail Europe has websites in 13 languages (www.raileurope.com.au, www.raileurope.cn, www.raileurope-japan.com, etc.) with 12 different currencies and 14 payment methods

We are by definition an international company—and that's the root of our website challenges. Our customers are located in countries around the world and span multiple time zones, currencies, and languages.

Although we sell some tickets through domestic agents and white-label packages to tour operators, we also sell a lot of them directly on our websites. And as our business expanded, we realized we needed to revamp our website architecture to keep up. We wanted to provide the same high-quality service across the board—even to customers living 15,000 km from our servers.

"Now we can design websites optimized for today's mobile devices like tablets and smartphones."

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What technology did you select to achieve that goal?

Once we decided to revamp our system, we found we didn't have a lot of options. We could either split our platform into numerous components with separate infrastructure for each region, which would have caused major headaches in terms of sizing and upgrades, or we could enhance our existing infrastructure with the help of a content delivery network provider, which would optimize the supply of content to our websites.

A quick look at the numbers and the hurdles we would face in some of the regions we cover prompted us to go for the second option. We saw that content delivery optimization would let us rapidly roll out a global network and support future upgrades. The next step was choosing a provider; our primary criterion was location. The provider had to have resources located near our end users. That's where CDNetworks stood apart. They impressed us with their expansive coverage in terms of both geographical reach and the capacity to adapt to local conditions.

We selected an architecture and tested its performance to make sure it was appropriate for our needs. CDNetworks convinced us that not only had we chosen the right technology, but we had also picked a reliable partner for ongoing support. They worked with us to select the best configuration options, especially for which type of content to store in cache.

Thanks to their assistance, in just a few weeks we were able to determine the ideal architecture for our needs and the needs of our customers. That also proved to be a wise strategic decision, particularly for achieving best-in-class performance in countries like Australia, where IT infrastructure is still a real challenge, or in Singapore where, on the other hand, website users are accustomed to perfectly seamless navigation.

What concrete benefits have you seen from the new architecture?

The benefits of a network roll-out are usually hard to measure unless you set up complicated, elaborate measurement processes. But not in this case. For us it was simple—we immediately had a clear signal that we had made the right choice when users stopped complaining about *"frozen"* web pages. That problem was obviously the result of a slow network, and it disappeared. Now all our users, no matter where they are based—Paris, Sydney, London, or Tokyo—can enjoy nearly the same website response time and performance.

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Figure 2. Response times have been slashed by a factor of 2.5.

But beyond this initial boost to customer satisfaction, we also improved the overall user experience by making our websites more attractive and easier to navigate. We revamped the graphic design and added eye-catching pictures—a must for the travel industry. What's more, now we can design websites optimized for today's mobile devices like tablets and smartphones.

CDNetworks provided valuable support and technical know-how throughout this high-stakes project. Their experts helped us get the most out of the content delivery networks we are now using. And for a company like ours, the feeling of being *"on the right track"* with technology is priceless!

About CDNetworks

CDNetworks is a global content delivery network (CDN) with fully integrated Cloud Security DDoS protection and web application firewall. Our mission is to transform the Internet into a secure, reliable, scalable, and high-performing Application Delivery Network. CDNetworks accelerates more than 40,000 websites and cloud services over a network of 200 global PoPs in established and emerging markets including China and Russia. We have been serving enterprise customers for 15 years across industries such as gaming, finance, ecommerce, high tech, manufacturing, and media. CDNetworks offices are located in the U.S., UK, South Korea, China, Japan, and Singapore. For more information, please visit: http://www.cdnetworks.com

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