

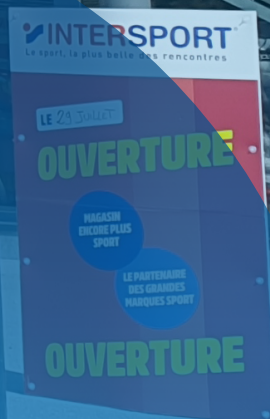


INTERSPORT

Intersport relies
on Varnish for
performance, resilience,
and granular cache
management abilities

Case Study:

Intersport



Intersport relies on Varnish for performance, resilience, and granular cache management abilities

Background

Intersport is one of the world's leading sporting goods retailers with operations in 57 countries on all five continents. This includes both retail stores and e-commerce operations. An international company with region and country-specific organizations, Intersport has a global reach.

In the French and Belgian organization, there are about 630 physical retail locations and a rapidly growing e-commerce business. For Intersport France and Belgium, their increasingly important web operations rely on an internal technical and digital team that focuses on performance and security of their websites.

The challenge: High-performance, secure content delivery

The Intersport technical team, tasked with ensuring secure, high-performance content delivery, faced challenges when they brought their technical operations in-house and formed a new digital team. With an overarching aim of improving user experience, they also wanted to introduce more agile cache management to more easily accommodate the complexities of the “eternal optimization” process of caching.

Intersport at a glance

Organization

- Intersport is one of the world's leading sporting goods retailers with operations in 57 countries on all five continents. Intersport France/Belgium is a sub-organization of the larger company.

Challenge

- Adopt configurable, agile cache management to ensure accuracy and performance
- Implement initial line of defense against bot/DDoS attacks
- Improve user experience with faster page loads

Varnish Enterprise

- Granular caching technology, Varnish Configuration Language (VCL)
- Professional Varnish support



Caching a static corporate page, for example, is easy. You set a time to live, and you're done. For e-commerce, you may cache a product or list page, but you also have to cache lists of stores, points of localization, personalization and so on. It's complex and needs granular configurability.

*-Michael Alimi,
CTO, Intersport*

With website traffic to the French and Belgian sites ranging from 1.7 million visitors on November 17 and 6 million on November 20, 2020, an exponential leap in traffic from previous years, Intersport has had to grow to accommodate massive user growth. This has been especially important during the Covid-19 pandemic, as e-commerce became the focal point of the business with thousands of simultaneous users visiting the website during peak times.

With this new level of traffic, Intersport also needed to provide more robust security for their web properties by finding an initial solution for weeding out bot traffic and avoiding DDoS attacks.

The solution: Varnish for flexible cache management and as first line of defense

Having previous experience with Varnish gave Intersport the confidence to move forward with Varnish Enterprise. Easy to implement and already integrated with Intersport's hosting partner, Varnish offered the cache agility and configurability and security layer Intersport was seeking.

Beyond performance and caching protocols, Varnish has served as a first line of defense against bot/DDoS attacks, acting as an effective protection layer against invalid traffic overloads.

We needed to implement a fully configurable and easy-to-change solution that could manage all the challenges we faced. I had used open source Varnish Cache in previous roles and had seen what it could offer in terms of power and performance.

*-Michael Alimi,
CTO, Intersport*

The complexity of the Intersport setup, or indeed most e-commerce setups, requires a “permanent optimization of cache” mindset and the ability to act quickly to configure and reconfigure the cache based on performance and demand. Varnish offers the ability to adopt a flexible and configurable cache strategy managed by our internal devops team. Other tools don't make it as easy to change.

*-Michael Alimi,
CTO, Intersport*



Results

Intersport has realized tangible benefits from their Varnish implementation:

- **Resilience, first line of defense and ability to handle traffic spikes**
Being able to handle new levels of traffic, including spikes, while protecting servers from overload and delivering fast page loads and consistently good user experience.
- **Granular cache management**
Having a highly configurable, hands-on caching tool enables cache flexibility to ensure that web pages are always up-to-date and performing optimally.

Intersport and Varnish: The future

Intersport will continue to build on the flexibility of Varnish as their online operations continue to grow.

I consider myself a kind of Varnish ambassador. When we need support, we always have someone at Varnish who provides quick answers – even in French! – we are very happy with this and feel we have a partnership with Varnish.

*-Michael Alimi,
CTO, Intersport*



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