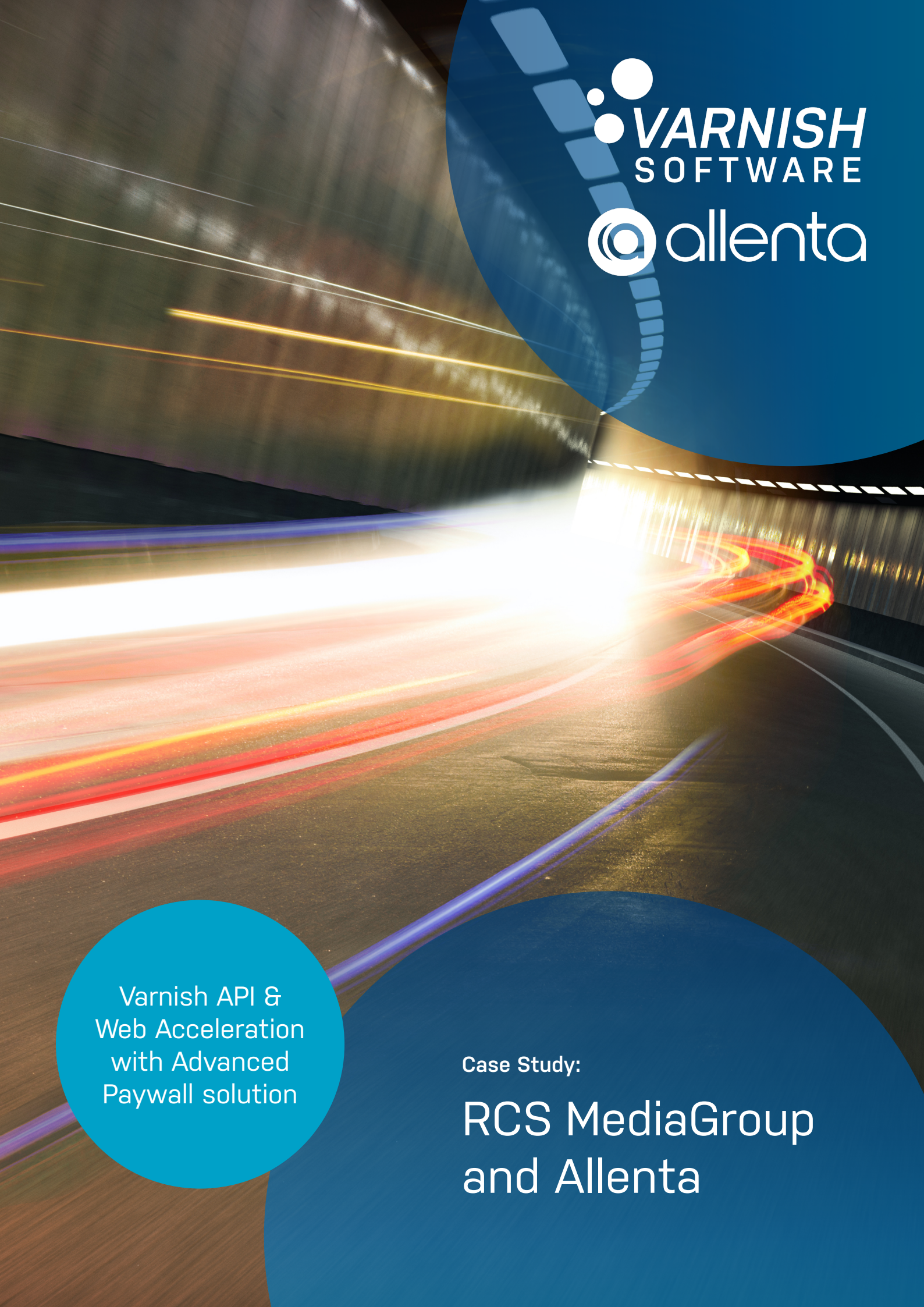


Varnish API & Web Acceleration with Advanced Paywall solution

Case Study:

RCS MediaGroup and Allenta

Allenta helped RCS MediaGroup implement **Varnish API & Web Acceleration** advanced access control paywall for digital media properties - seamless integration and no performance reduction

Who is RCS MediaGroup?

RCS MediaGroup is one of the world's major multimedia publishing groups, based in Milan, Italy. It operates in daily newspapers, magazines and books, radio broadcasting, new media and digital and satellite TV. It is also one of the leading operators in the advertisement sales and distribution markets.

In Italy, the group manages large daily newspapers, such as Corriere della Sera and La Gazzetta dello Sport, among others.

The stated main mission of RCS MediaGroup has always been to produce and propagate culture, information, services and entertainment, while respecting the principles of liberty, honesty and pluralism, and driving innovation across all forms of communication. The goal is to be the most authoritative, innovative and culturally stimulating source of information for their readers and for the wider world.

What challenges made Allenta introduce RCS MediaGroup to Varnish?

The media and publishing industry has struggled with the move to increasingly digital consumption models - facing declining circulation and subscription numbers as well as lower ad revenues over the last decade or more. Adoption of different technologies and revenue models has helped, but projections remain grim, particularly for ads. Thus, digital media outlets are constantly on the lookout for new revenue-generating possibilities, which has led to new ways of accessing information and content.

In the face of this, RCS MediaGroup extended their business model to include digital subscriptions for Corriere della Sera, one of their main newspapers. While the main requirements were scalability and reliability, the real challenge was in finding a paywall solution able to integrate flexibly with the systems already in place and deliver capably the sustained performance required by one of the top newspapers in Europe.

Allenta's Varnish-powered solution for RCS MediaGroup

After the initial stages of RFI/RFP where RCS MediaGroup targeted Varnish API & Web Acceleration as a solution for their needs, a first workshop session took place in Milan where the tech teams of RCS MediaGroup and Allenta elaborated on the scope and the integration framework for the project.

At that point it was clear that the well-known and proven capabilities of Varnish established a solid ground on top of which the access control layer or paywall could be built. Using the flexible framework that Varnish API & Web Acceleration offers, the developers in the Allenta team integrated the Advanced Paywall set of tools. This combination allowed an approach that combines essential features for a complex, demanding scenario:

High performance and peace of mind, delivered by the core Varnish Cache Plus component, during moments of peak traffic

Powerful and flexible integration of the access control layer with subscriber, subscription and content categorization services, delivered by the Advanced Paywall component.

Besides the well-known features of Varnish API & Web Acceleration and its components, the Advanced Paywall component developed by Allenta provides all the necessary logic for a high performance access control layer, implemented by specific VMODs, snippets of VCL configuration and control daemons.

One of the key issues addressed by this combination was preventing any loss of performance due to the access control logic or, in plain terms, the performance for premium content delivery was as fast as usual without delays for the most valuable users.

"The well-known and proven capabilities of Varnish API & Web Acceleration established a solid ground on top of which the access control layer or paywall could be built."

How does Varnish API & Web Acceleration with Advanced Paywall work?

The basic requirements for a successful implementation of Varnish with Advanced Paywall are as easy as defining a caching strategy, a content categorization policy and a few trivial API services. All in all, the backend should provide the answer to a set of simple questions:

Is this content protected by the paywall?

Is the current user authenticated?

Is the user allowed to access this content?

Working with digitally signed cookies and a high-performance key-value storage system, we can leverage all the power of the caching layer to solve, at blazing speed, whether the user is entitled to get the content and what to do afterwards (e.g. show him how great it would be to have a subscription).

The Result

The deployment of the Varnish API & Web Acceleration with Advanced Paywall system as a caching layer for Corriere della Sera resulted in a seamless integration with the pre-existing backend systems, allowing for a high performance operation for paywalled content.

The Future

A dynamic environment, such as digital media publishing, requires a flexible product approach that adapts to new challenges. Varnish API & Web Acceleration with Advanced Paywall establishes a framework that enables adaptations as required.

One of the latest additions, which exists in the present, was the Google AMP Access support for the paywalled content. With a close collaboration that included RCS MediaGroup, Allenta, Varnish and Google AMP teams, the result was an extension to the paywall features that made possible again a great integration.

New features and ongoing organic improvements will be deployed, keeping a high bar in terms of product capabilities and excellence in engaging with the final customer.

About Varnish Software

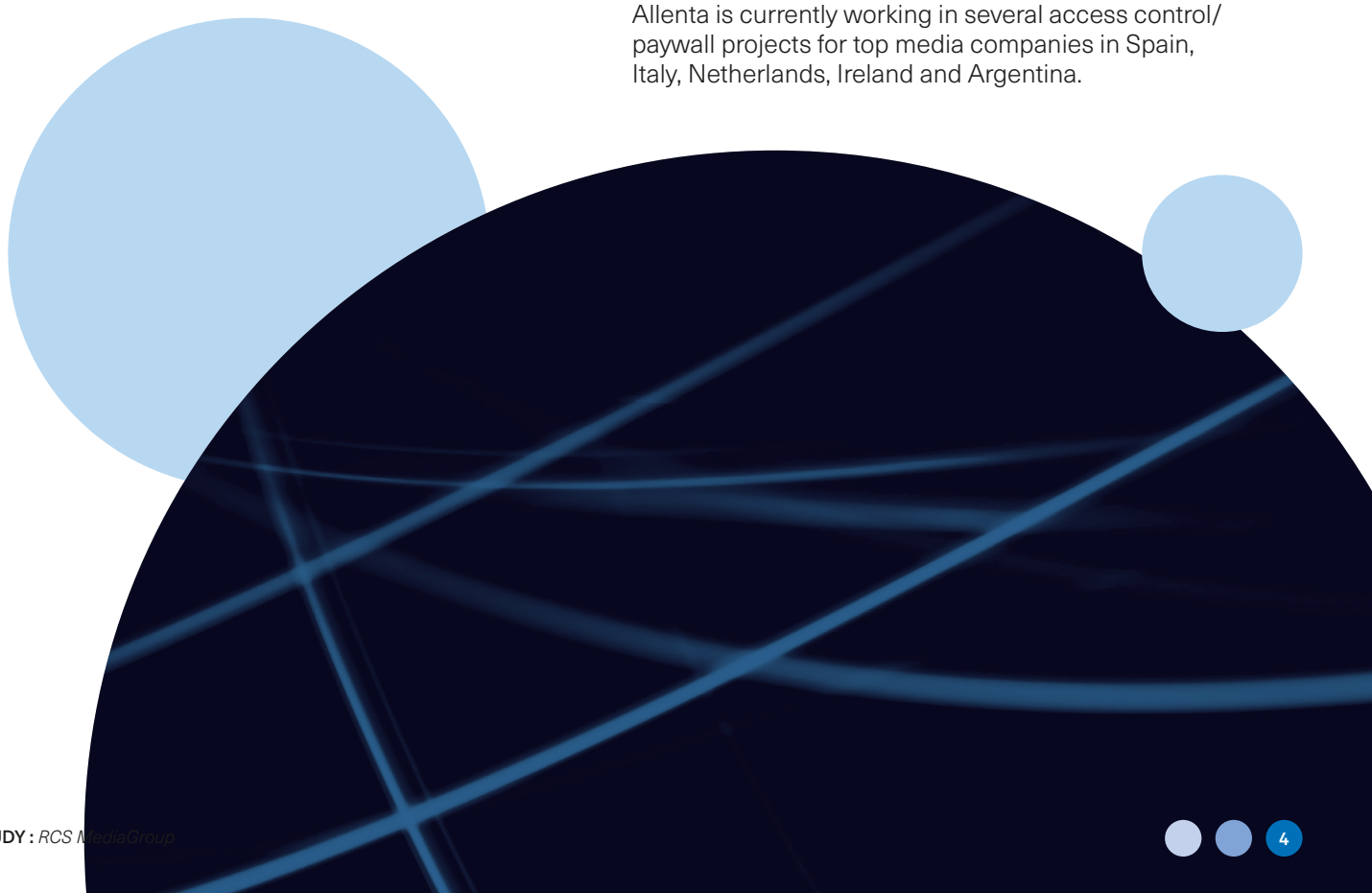
Varnish Software's mission is to significantly enhance web performance for businesses online. Varnish powers major sites across all industry types - for businesses such as Tesco, Nikon, Boozt, Eurosport and Tesla as well as more than 2.8 million websites worldwide. Varnish Software's web performance and content delivery solutions offer scalability, customization, monitoring and expert support services.

About Allenta

Allenta Consulting specialises in the design and administration of Linux and Unix systems infrastructure. The Allenta team consists of highly skilled technical professionals with experience working with top level organisations.

For several years they have been working with Varnish Cache as part of their catalogue of customer solutions. At some point, Allenta started to work with Varnish Software and became Integration Partner. Since then, there's has been a close partnership that has allowed Allenta to lead projects where deep skills in Varnish configuration and development of modules are necessary. Some of those projects focus in the access control to assets in the caching edge (e.g. paywall systems).

Allenta is currently working in several access control/ paywall projects for top media companies in Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Ireland and Argentina.

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