

Akamai Gains Traction with Web App Acceleration Service

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Akamai Technologies on May 7 will launch a range of enhancements for its Akamai Web Application Accelerator designed to bolster the managed services offering as an alternative to in-house application acceleration deployments.

Akamai, which became the only Web application acceleration managed service with its acquisition earlier this year of Netli, added new availability oriented Service Level Agreements, 14 more locations for the overlay network it uses to deliver its services, new performance reporting and other performance-boosting features.

With the enhancements, "existing customers get better performance, reporting and we're allowing new customers to turn on the service even quicker - through - pre-defined integration - of new applications - ," said Neil Cohen, product line manager at Akamai in Cambridge, Mass.

Akamai created pre-defined integration packages for accelerating SAP, Oracle and IBM WebSphere portal applications. The packages provide configuration and tuning to shorten the time it takes to deploy acceleration for those applications. "Customers get the benefits and experience of the integrations we've done over the past two years from the start," said Cohen.

Akamai launched the service two years ago and now has at least 125 customers and growing, according to Cohen.

The service, based on Akamai's overlay network with 3,000 locations in 1,000 service-provider networks around the globe, is positioned as an alternative to in-house deployments of application acceleration appliances in remote locations and the data center. But that limits the appeal of the service in the context of that broader market, according to Joe Skorupa, industry analyst with Gartner in Fremont, Calif.

"They can only accelerate browser-based apps today and they don't yet have a box on the customer premises. So if you have a skinny pipe going to a branch office, you still have a skinny pipe," he said.

By and large that is not an issue for customers at Satuit Technologies, a Norwell, Mass., Software-as-a-Service company offering Customer Relationship Management and sales force automation. "The service overall is working out extremely well for us," said Njal Larson, senior vice president of product strategy. Satuit has "seen a drop off in calls to its call center about performance issues. We've also seen performance improvements on the server side. We've offloaded 65 percent of traffic from our origin servers," said Larson.

Still, "the closer we can get the acceleration to the client the better. Some of our clients would consider - putting an appliance on premises - ," he added.

Akamai's new SLA offers customers 100 percent availability with its platform, which has redundancy built in with "lots of failover capabilities," said Cohen. Akamai is also adding new performance-based reports that show customers in real time how Akamai is optimizing a router for a specific customer. The new Edge Control Management Center Portal allows customers to select an origin and destination to see the route the Internet would take based on its Border Gateway Protocol versus what Akamai uses in its overlay network.

Akamai continued to build out that network with 14 new international locations in Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The new features are available now for the service, which is priced starting at \$10,000 per month per application.

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