



Weight Watchers
Case Study

Weight Watchers Uses NS1 to Automate and Streamline DNS.



Challenge

NS1.



Solution

What started as a group of friends talking about how best to lose weight, has now grown to millions of members worldwide who share the common goals of weight management and healthy living. Now serving a global online community of millions of users, Weight Watchers' focus is on delivering reliable access to their member online tools and services. Weight Watchers needed to streamline their infrastructure and automate application delivery to improve response time and give their customers a better user experience.

Weight Watchers' internal networks had a diverse DNS infrastructure with 100s of corporate IT servers using Active Directory for DNS resolution in one part of the company, while other teams had their own IT servers running BIND for DNS in another part of the company. Streamlining and simplifying was a top priority in order to make it easier to manage and maintain the overall network.

Weight Watchers' had three concrete goals in mind regarding their DNS network management. First, they wanted to migrate their Akamai hosted CDN to Fastly, and it had to be done without interrupting the workflow of internal users or community members' access to tools and services. Second, they wanted to streamline and simplify their DNS infrastructure with a solution that could be automated using an API. Finally, the IT organization wanted to migrate the Rackspace private cloud into AWS with the goal of adding an additional cloud provider after the migration.

A key metric Weight Watchers needed in a DNS solution was low turnaround time on DNS changes to the edge servers in the network. The streamlining and automation goals for their DNS network management would require changes to be made programmatically via the API. The longer the turnaround time, the longer the scripts would have to wait for verification that the edge servers were updated with changes.

“ My end goal is to automate everything DNS. NS1 is the only provider with the right technical stack to do that. ”

Kanwar Gill, Senior Director DevOps,
Weight Watchers

A phased approach was designed to meet Weight Watchers' needs without significantly impacting their daily work. Working with NS1's engineers, Weight Watchers began implementing a 3-phase project to (1) put all public facing DNS into NS1's Managed DNS solution and migrate the CDN from Akamai to Fastly, (2) migrate their Rackspace private cloud to AWS, putting the remaining internal DNS management into NS1's Managed DNS solution, and (3) automate the DNS maintenance tasks using NS1's API. Additionally, Weight Watchers implemented NS1's Dedicated DNS product to ensure redundancy in their DNS solution.

Weight Watchers is currently (mid-2017) 7 months into the project and phase 1 is nearing completion. The migration from Akamai to Fastly CDN has been accomplished. All public facing DNS resolution across the organization has moved NS1's Managed DNS.

Phase 2 is the migration from Rackspace private cloud to AWS. It will involve moving all DNS resolution for the corporate data center and cloud resources to NS1. Phase 2's goal is to move as much of the DNS network resolution to NS1 as possible, thereby and minimizing any dependency on other DNS solutions.

Phase 3 is still in the planning stages. This phase will automate DNS maintenance tasks using NS1's API. Once these tasks are automated, members of the NOC or the business side of the company will be able to request DNS changes without logging directly onto the managed DNS console.

Weight Watchers selected NS1 based on NS1's ability to meet the technical requirements laid out by their Senior Director of DevOps. His goals for Weight Watchers required a solution that included (1) a robust API that would allow for 100% programmable automation and (2) a DNS propagation speed to the edge servers of less than 10 minutes. The end goal was to fully automate everything DNS related, which could not happen properly if the network propagation speed was more than 10 minutes to the edge. NS1's Managed DNS and Dedicated DNS were able to meet these two technical needs and were chosen as Weight Watchers' DNS solution.

NS1.

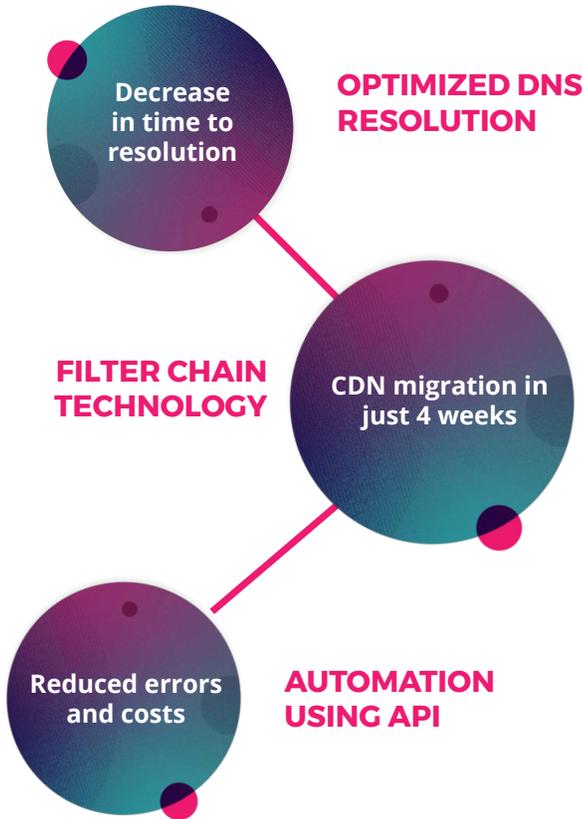
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Results

Phase 1 of the project has already provided two substantial benefits for Weight Watchers: DNS resolution time reduced by 30 - 40%, and migration from Akamai to Fastly CDN in just 4 weeks. Additionally, as part of the DNS migration to NS1, they were able to clean up a significant number of DNS records that were taking up space in their old DNS system. The total record count went from a couple million records to 3200 records.



Weight Watchers credits NS1's **Filter Chain™** technology as a key factor in facilitating the CDN migration project. They setup a Filter Chain to shift CDN traffic based on source IP address. This allowed Weight Watchers to handle their internal testing for the Fastly CDN, then shift traffic as it was fully tested and online. By handling QA and network traffic in this fashion, Weight Watchers was able to migrate from Akamai to Fastly without end user impact and in just 4 weeks, which was significantly faster than originally anticipated. Finally, while not a primary concern in this first phase of the project, cost savings are currently recognized in the reduced time to resolution on NS1's network and more streamlined work environment now that the unusable records have been cleaned out of the DNS system.

Additional cost savings are expected to be recognized as the next phases roll out. Currently, the costs remain stable. In Phase 2, Weight Watchers will retire old hardware previously used to handle DNS traffic now handled by NS1. At that time, they expect to see a substantial cost savings.

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About Weight Watchers

In the early '60s, Weight Watchers founder Jean Nidetch began inviting friends into her Queens, NY home once a week to talk about how best to lose weight. Fast forward 5 decades and it's safe to say that Weight Watchers has become a global phenomenon, with massive growth in their traditional and digital business models.

Their program is not a diet or a magic number on a scale. It's about living. It's about seeing food as fuel for a healthy life, finding ways to move more each day, and developing the skills to make healthy choices for life. (**Weight Watchers**)

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