"On Thursday afternoon, Yahoo put a link in the 'Featured' box at the top of their home page to [a] Home and Garden story.

In an instant, traffic to our site nearly tripled, breaking a couple of records: nearly 7,300 hits per second and 4.9 million page views for the hour in which the spike occurred, then 4.2 million in the following hour."
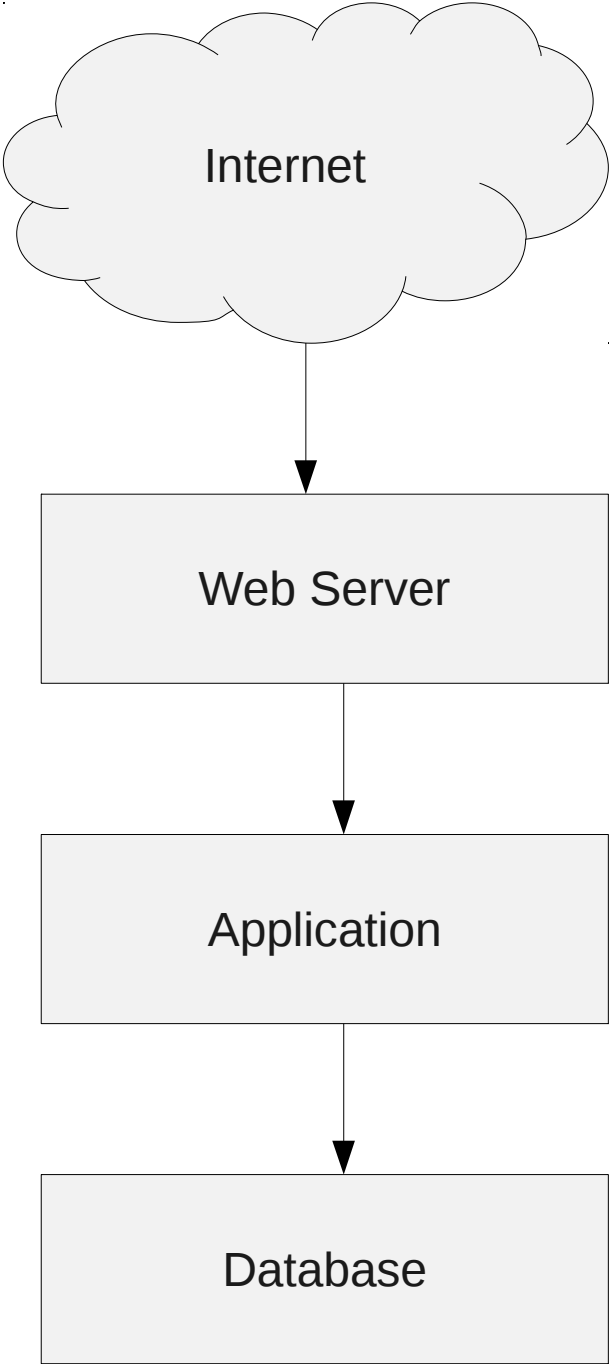
- Denise Warren, New York Times. June 2009
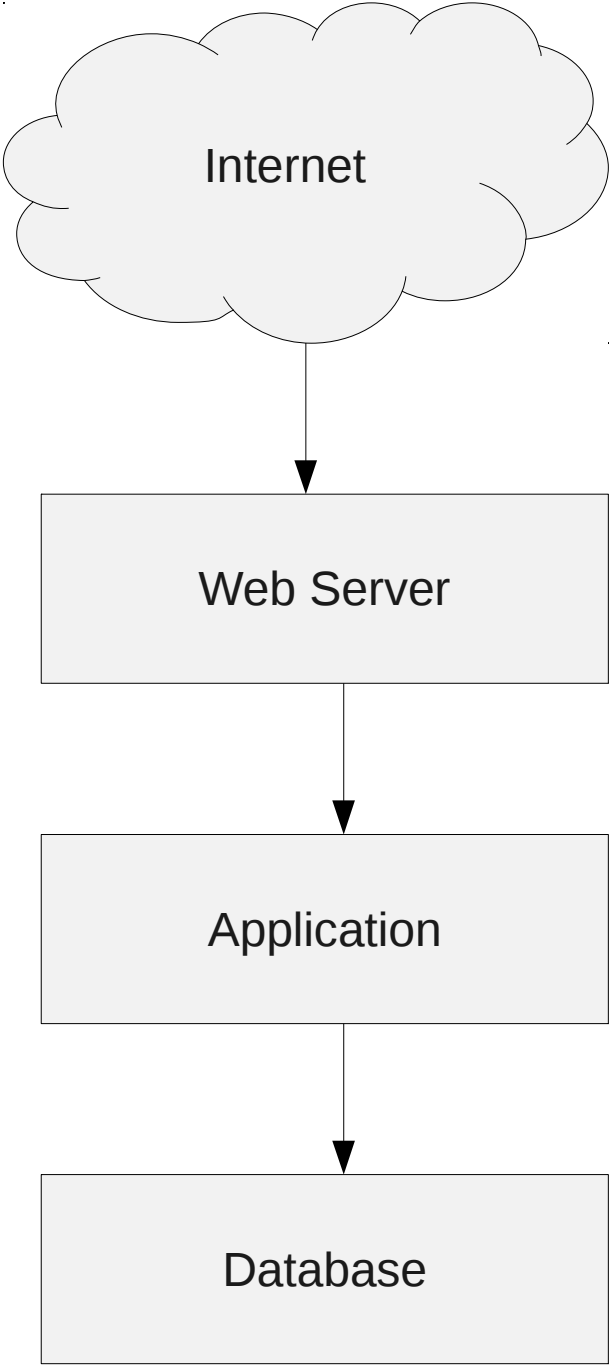
HTTP Acceleration with Varnish

Simon Lyall

Sysadmin Miniconf
linux.conf.au 2011

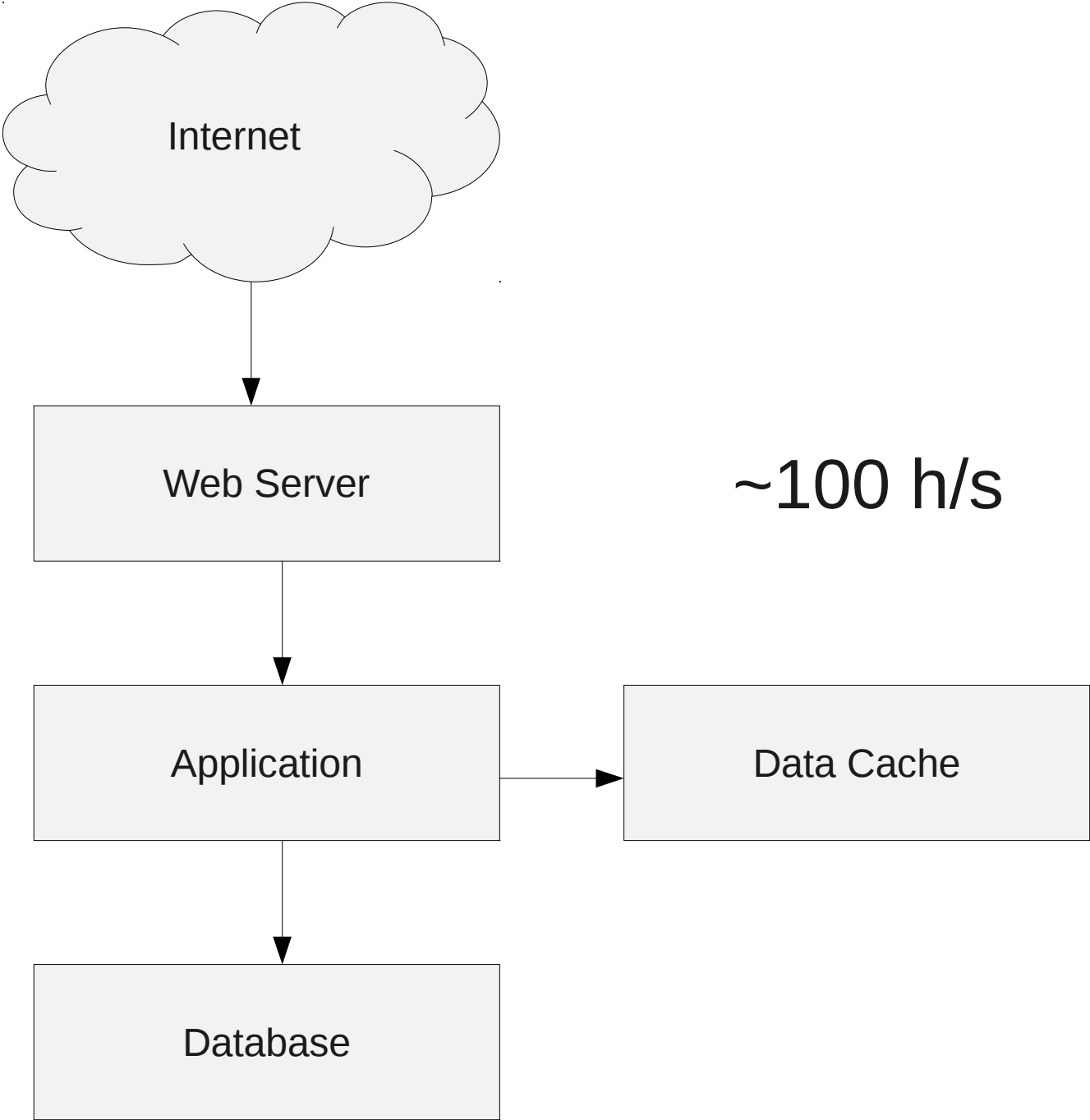Slashdot / Reddit / Digg

10 – 30,000 visits over 48 hours

```
            ┌─────────────┐
            │   Internet   │
            └──────┬──────┘
                   │
                   ▼
            ┌─────────────┐
            │ Web Server  │
            └──────┬──────┘
                   │
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            ┌─────────────┐
            │ Application │
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            │  Database   │
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```

```
         ╭─────────╮
        ╱  Internet  ╲
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               │
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       ┌───────────────┐
       │  Web Server   │
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               ▼                    5 - 10 h/s
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       │  Application  │
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       ┌───────────────┐
       │   Database    │
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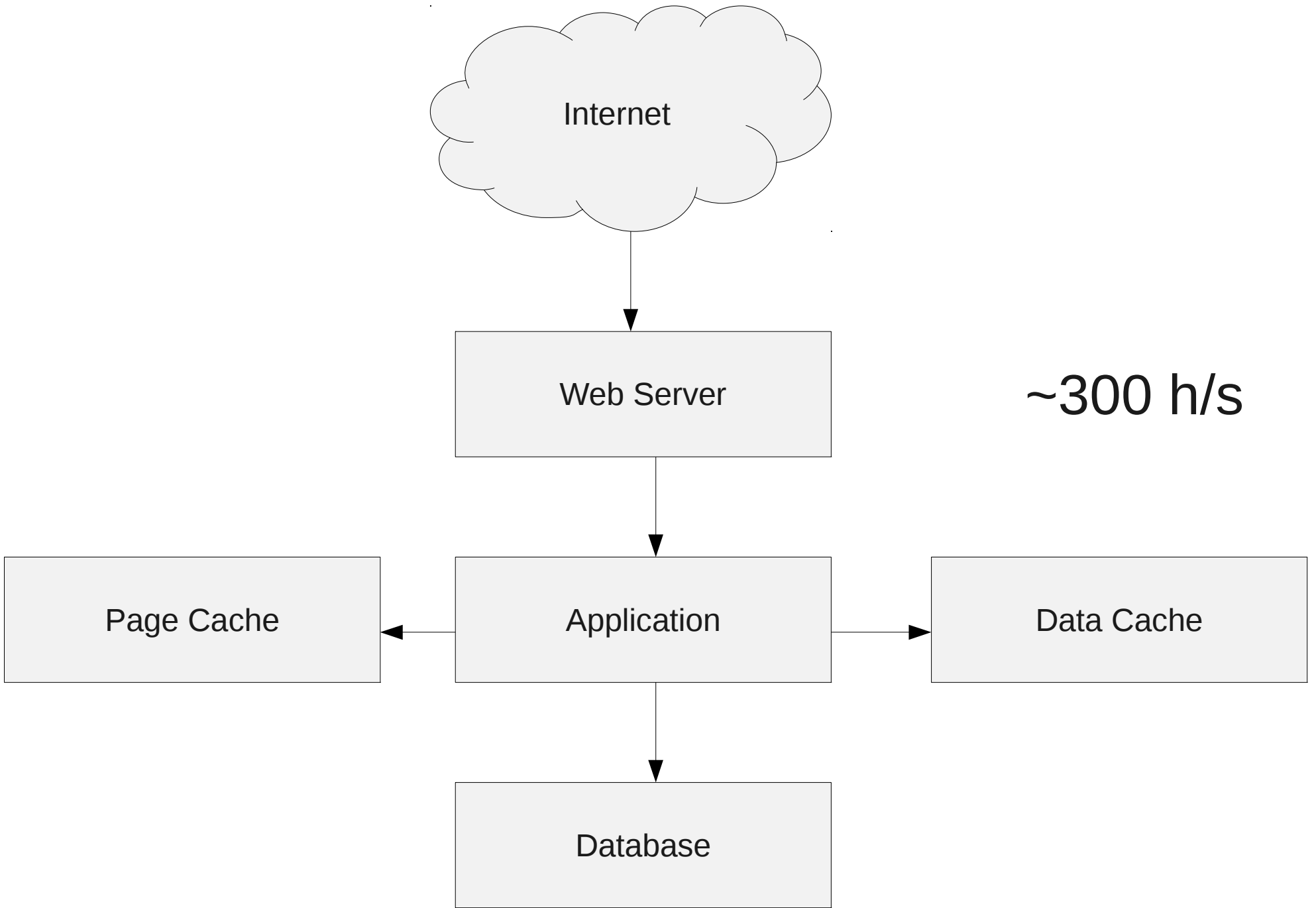
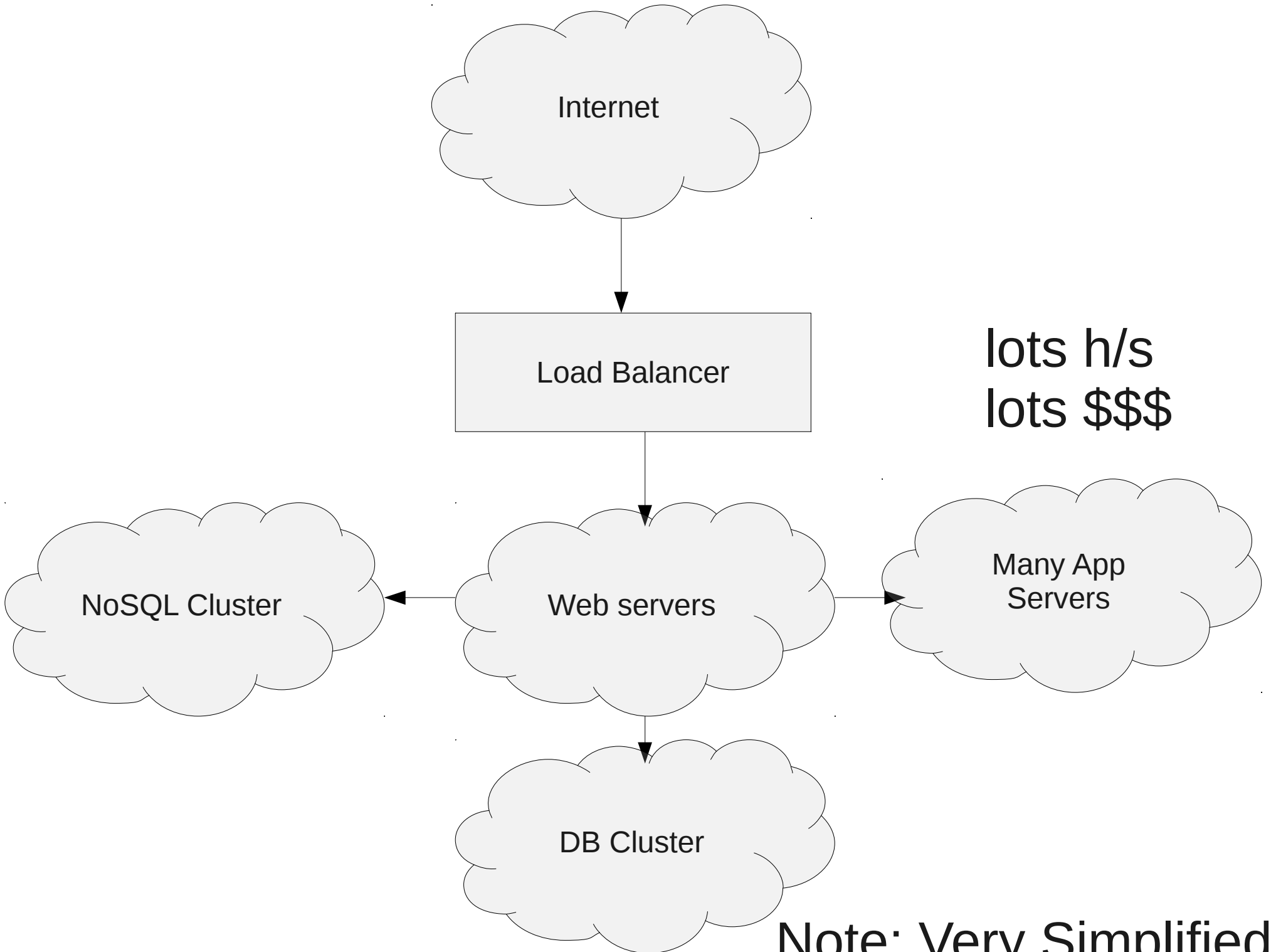It gets worse.

5 – 10 h/s is a good case

Some people have:

- Slow application servers
- Big datasets
- Complicated queries
- Multi-second page generation, (on a good day)

If only this solution was more scalable...

```
                    Internet


                                          ~100 h/s
                   Web Server


                   Application          Data Cache


                   Database
```

```
                    ╭─────────────╮
                    │   Internet  │
                    ╰─────────────╯
                          │
                          ▼
                    ┌─────────────┐
                    │ Web Server  │        ~300 h/s
                    └─────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐
│ Page Cache  │◄────│ Application │────►│ Data Cache  │
└─────────────┘     └─────────────┘     └─────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
                    ┌─────────────┐
                    │  Database   │
                    └─────────────┘
```

Internet

Load Balancer

lots h/s
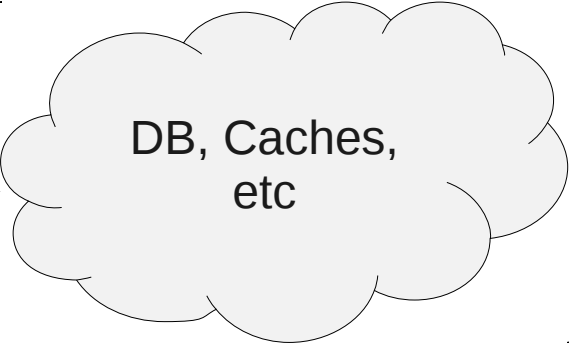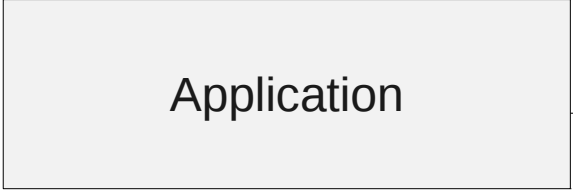lots $$$

NoSQL Cluster

Web servers

Many App Servers

DB Cluster

Note: Very Simplified

But if you are serving the same* page
to everybody why send each hit
to the app server?

* For various values of "the same"

Internet

Web Accelerator

1k - 5k h/s

Web Server

Application
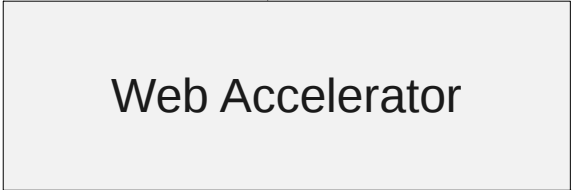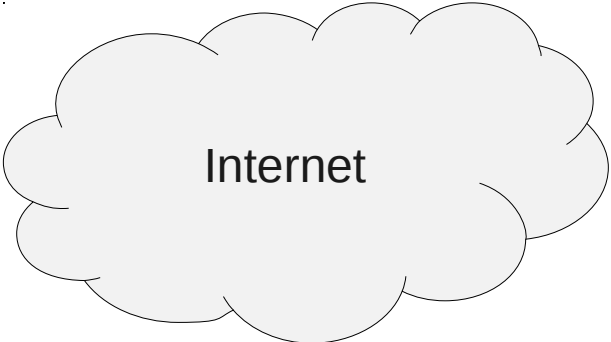
DB, Caches,
etc

Web Accelerator

Cache at the Per Page/URL level

Optimised server to grab/cache/serve full webpages

1000 – 5000 h/s out of the box on commodity hardware

20k+ h/s with tuning

Examples

- Squid
- Varnish
- Lighttpd
- Nginx
- Apache Traffic Server
- Perlbal
- Pound
- BlueCoat Appliance
- F5 appliance
- ...

I'll concentrate on Varnish

- http://www.varnish-cache.org

- FreeBSD license
- Active Development

- Used by Large sites (twitter, NYTimes,
    Photobucket, wikileaks, Wikia, perezhilton)

- Simple basic Config
- Very extensionable

```
$ varnishd -f /etc/varnish.vcl -a 0.0.0.0:80
$ cat /etc/varnish.vcl

backend default {
  .host = "10.0.0.1";
  .port = "80";
}


sub vcl_recv {
  unset req.http.cookie;  }

sub vcl_fetch {
  set beresp.ttl = 60s; }
```

vcl_recv
    Called at the beginning of a request,
vcl_pipe
    Called upon entering pipe mode
vcl_hit
vcl_miss
vcl_fetch
    Called after a successfull retrieve from backend
vcl_deliver
    Called before a cached object is sent to the client
vcl_error
    Called when we hit an error

How cacheable is content?

Images	extremely
Javascript Libraries	extremely
CSS	very
javascript	very
404 pages	somewhat
HTML	it depends

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Opposing Pressures

1. Keep the cache hit rate high and keep the load on the backend low

2. Make sure the content served is uptodate

Strategies

- Different expire times for different content.

- Explicitly flush content from cache when changed

- Use javascript to display less cache-able elements

What to push to the cache?

- anything that will spoil your hit rate
- url rewrites (ref=)
- mobile redirects
- different pages to logged in users
- serve pages when backend down
- alter expire times
- tidy up headers (user-agent, accept-encoding)

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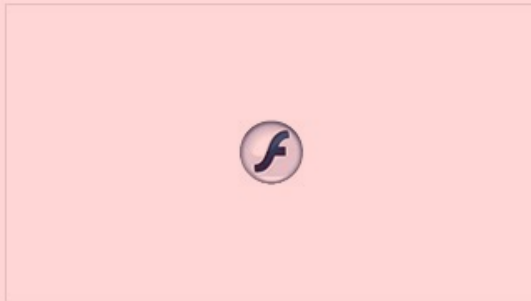
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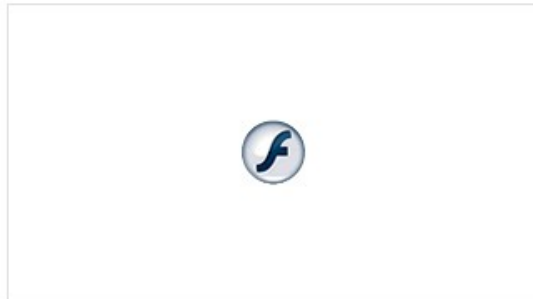
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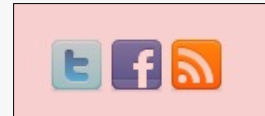Really a beautiful video, both in content and the amazing work Anton did in filming & producing it.

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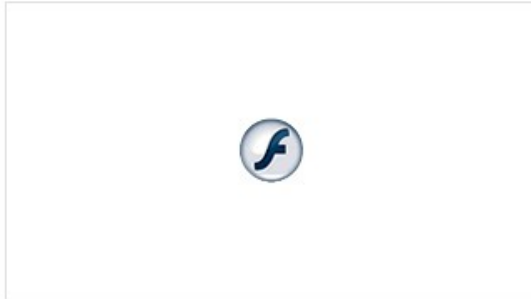
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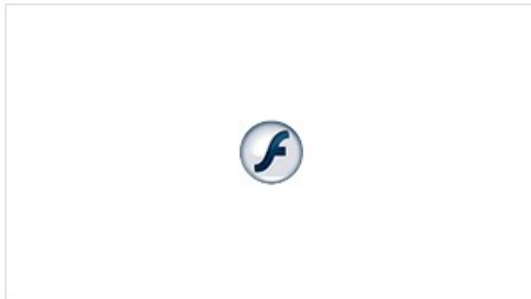
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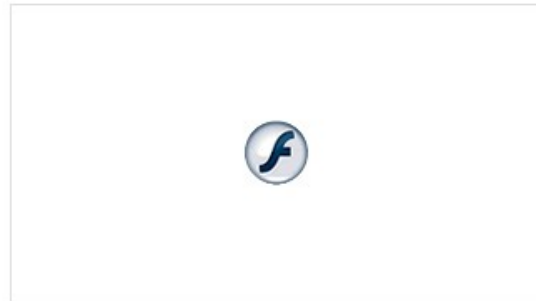
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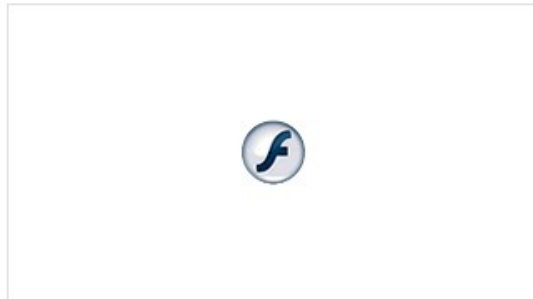
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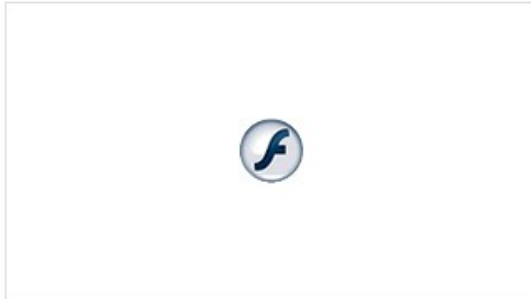
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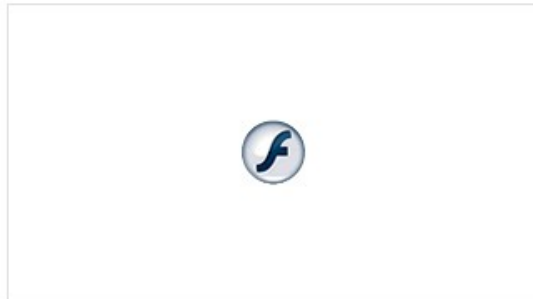
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👤 **Greg Howard**	September 21, 2010 at 6:42 pm	#2 Quote Great video! Nice to see inside both SmugMug and Bay.

🐦   📘   📶

What I'm Doing:

- @bleything Which post(s) were you reading so I know which angle(s) you're most interested in? 8 hours ago

- Learned: "Resolution" = In terms of PPI/DPI, 1024x768->2048x1536 is doubled since "I" = square. In terms of pixels, it's quadrupled. 8 hours ago

- @bleything Time for more updates? Have some interesting homebrewed hardware we just deployed... :) 8 hours ago

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SmugMug's Don MacAskill

SmugMug's Co-Founder, CEO & Chief Geek

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📅 September 21, 2010 👤 Don MacAskill

Anton Lorimer, a SmugMug customer and unbelievable photographer and videographer, recently filmed an excellent look inside SmugMug for us:

Make sure to go Fullscreen and turn HD on, or click through to see A look inside SmugMug bigger.

There's quite the discussion going on over at Facebook, too.

It's awesome to take a step back and look at what all of our years of hard work have built. The future is bright, I'm excited for our customers and employees!

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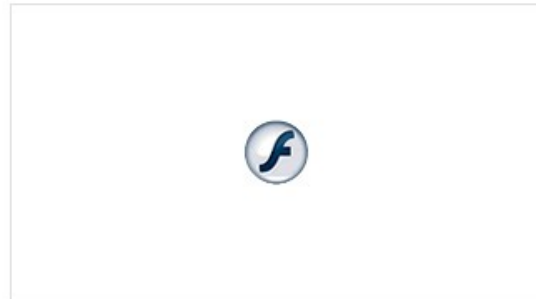
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URL tidy

htttp://www.example.com/
htttp://www.example.com/?ref=twitter
htttp://www.example.com/?ref=rss

```
if (req.http.host == "www.example.com" ) {
  set req.url = regsub(req.url, ".*\?ref=.*", "");
}
```

Mobile redirect

```
sub vcl_recv {
if (req.http.user-agent ~ ".*(iPhone|Android).*"  {
    error 750 req.url;
}

sub vcl_error {
if (obj.status == 750) {
    set obj.http.Location = "http://example.mobi" \
        obj.response;
    set obj.status = 302;
    return (deliver);
} }
```

Expired Cache Grace

Serve old page while new generating

```
sub vcl_recv {
  unset req.http.cookie;
  set req.grace = 15s;
}


sub vcl_fetch {
  set beresp.ttl = 60s;
  set beresp.grace = 15s;
}
```

Accept-Encoding Normalisation

```
if (req.http.Accept-Encoding) {
    if (req.url ~ "\.(jpg|png|gif|mp3|ogg|flv)$") {
        # No point in compressing these
        remove req.http.Accept-Encoding;
    } elsif (req.http.Accept-Encoding ~ "gzip") {
        set req.http.Accept-Encoding = "gzip";
    } else {
        # unkown algorithm
        remove req.http.Accept-Encoding;
    }
}
```

Expire times

By default varnish will cache and object according to te normal expire headers

```
if (req.url ~ "(.js|.css)$") {
    set obj.ttl = 60m;
}
else {
    set obj.ttl = 45m; // default ttl 45 minutes
}
```

If backend down then just serve expired pages

```
# If the backend is healthy then serve
# expired copies of pages for up to
# 30s while waiting for new copy.
# However if backend is unhealthy then serve
# expired pages for up to an hour
#
if (req.backend.healthy) {
    set req.grace = 30s;
} else {
    set req.grace = 1h;
}
```

Serve different content if users not logged in.

```
# Change URL if logged in cookie missing
#
if (req.http.Cookie !~".*loggedin=yes.*"  ) {

    set req.url = regsub(req.url, "^", "unauthed/");
}
```

Edge Side Includes

```sh
#!/bin/sh
echo 'Content-type: text/html'
echo ''
date "+%Y-%m-%d %H:%M"

<HTML>
<BODY>
The time is: <esi:include src="/cgi-bin/date.cgi"/>
at this very moment.
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

```
sub vcl_fetch {
    if (req.url == "/test.html") {
     esi;                      /* Do ESI processing */
     set obj.ttl = 24 h;  /* Sets TTL on the HTML */
    } elseif (req.url == "/cgi-bin/date.cgi") {
     set obj.ttl = 1m;   /* Sets a one minute TTL */
                               /* on the included object   */
    }
}
```

Now they've changed their logo, the brand values make so much more sense to me.

What happens when your website changes it's logo? CSS? Motto?

Every single page has to be recreated

Don't be the person to tell the brand manager this will take a month to do.