

Akamai • Performance Analytics Proof-of-concept 1/3

Ensuring the world's largest and most trusted cloud delivery platform retained a competitive advantage by creating a performance analytics product to help customers monitor and address web performance.

The brief

With a tagline of “Faster Forward” Akamai are experts in making apps and websites faster. Their vast customer base means access to a lot of data. Yet they didn't leverage all that data with a performance analytics product and longstanding customers were switching to the competition offering both a CDN and performance metrics. Performance analytics provides insight to improve performance for apps and websites, so it's a natural value-add for Akamai customers.

Users

- Analysts
- Developers
- DevOps Engineers
- Executives

My role

Senior User Experience Designer

Skills used

- Accessibility
- Data Visualization
- Design Thinking
- Information Architecture
- Interaction Design
- Rapid Prototyping
- Responsive & Progressive Web App Design
- Strategy
- User Research
- Visual Design

What I did

In December 2016 the product owner wanted to deviate from the in-house UX process, which was too slow for this product. Originally scoped as a team with a researcher and data visualization specialist, the role shifted to a UX team of one. I evaluated the current project research and strategy, conducted a competitive analysis, identified similar users within the organization, interviewed those users and documented in ad hoc, flexible personas. Then, juggled design work in wireframing, visual design, interaction design, and prototyping, leveraging a design-in-the-browser technique to expedite the process.

Improving the design process

Led a customer-centric design process by examining client goals through needs analysis, observation, and conducted analysis to validate stakeholder assumptions.

Iterated on a flexible design process with online tools for collaborating with a global remote team.

Key tools and deliverables

- Ad hoc, fluid personas (Google Site)
- Wireframes (myBalsamiq)
- Branding and visual design (Adobe Illustrator, HTML/CSS)
- Responsive, interactive prototypes (HTML/CSS/JS)
- Data visualization and investigation to align with user goals (Adobe Illustrator, d3.js, Highcharts)

Results

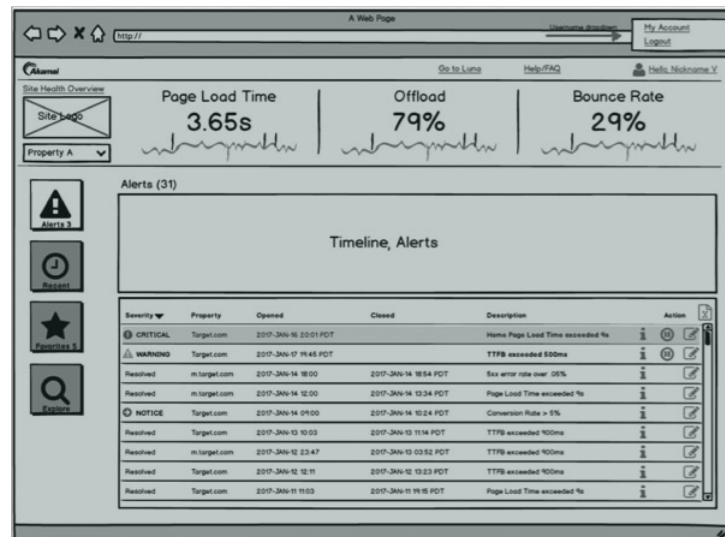
95% improvement in turnaround time attained by creating cost-effective process, reducing risk, and iterating on a flexible design proposal with online tools for collaborating with a remote team, creative user research, paired with HTML/CSS/JS prototypes.

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Iteration is for process, too


For me, a user experience is not just pixels and code. It's the result of a collaborative team, encouraged to share insights, ideas, expertise, and align vision. With an entirely remote global team, the usual whiteboarding was impossible. We tried using Google Drive, but the team needed something more structured. After a bit of research we landed on myBalsamiq. We documented requirements to be a world-class example of performance and accessibility.

To understand our users I located similar users within the company, conducted interviews, and gathered notes in ad hoc personas, updated as more insights were gained.



Capturing stakeholder vision in remote collaboration

Scott & Uday, web marketing dev leads



Receives alerts from MDS. Scott provided a [sample alert report/log](#), and insights.

“One key piece of info we’ve been asking for here is where our performance stands compared to 1) our completion websites, 2) best of the best (is our speed exceptional, average, etc..).”

Would find alert ownership useful (referring to feedback from Devin & how NR has the feature).

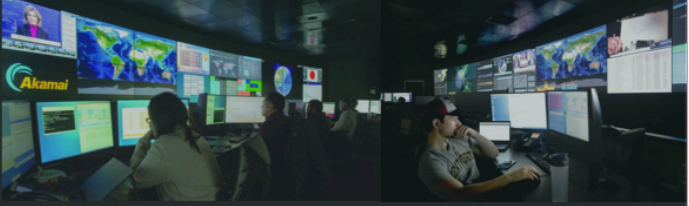
More interested in a table view of data than a visualization. Smart/relevant content in the table, ability to finetune, sort, filter, acknowledge/own, especially depending on user persona.

Doesn't want to receive alerts if TTFB increased 35% - would prefer alert if TTFB > industry benchmark.

Willing to be test users.

Wants individually etc. Said they imagi

Devin, NOCC



Not really a potential user, but a similar set of needs.

Much greater data density.

Alerts can stay open for years.

Data visualizations for alerts are useless for him — too much data, too many alerts, many conditions.

Granularity of data in table is key. They configure the table display. SMES (Subject Matter Experts) configure alerts.

Uses: <https://alerts.akamai.com> also suggested <https://insights.akamai.com> (doesn't load) but James said <https://aotq.akamai.com/optimize/> might be what he meant.

*Acknowledge alert = Take ownership of alert (New Relic uses ownership)

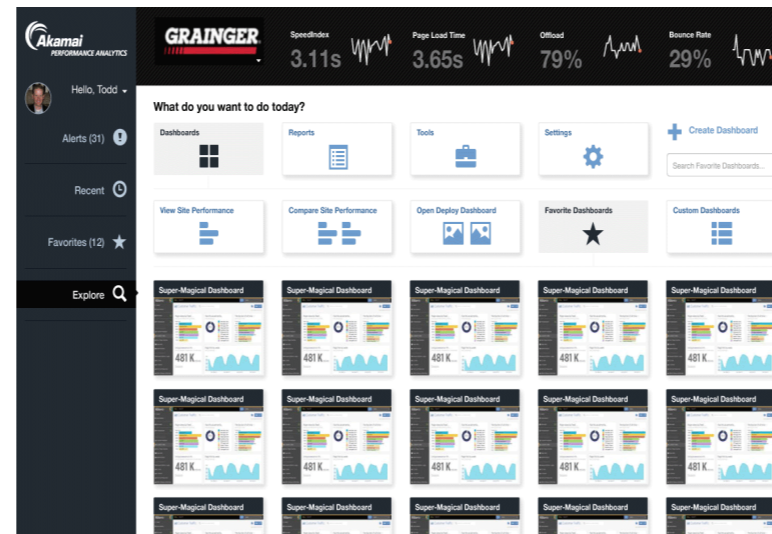
Notes from quick, casual interviews with similar users within the organization

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How I designed an iterative workflow and flexible design process



The product owner asked for product branding and a responsive login screen, while we were wireframing and documenting requirements for the dashboard landing pages. To keep the process nimble, I created four different concepts in HTML/CSS, in order to swap out stylesheets, but use the same content and structure. This expedited visual design and stakeholder feedback was quickly incorporated. We established the start of a responsive design pattern library within two weeks.



After the online collaboration of wireframes and identification of a visual design, we iterated applying visual design to individual landing pages for the dashboard, exploring card treatments, iconography, appropriate browser notifications, and facilitating discussion about user needs and business goals for the dashboard. Our focus was to surface insights and provide actionable expert options to address performance issues.



For the dashboard home landing page, the product owner wanted an alerts timeline displaying all alerts across a customer's product suite. We determined Highcharts would be the appropriate solution for an MVP. The design landed on a hybrid with alerts timeline above an interactive, actionable data grid.