

CASE STUDY

Optimize Web Performance with Health Check

Overview

ghd provides a wide range of innovative hair styling equipment and accessories. These include a number of unique products, such as the ghd eclipse® and the ghd V Gold Series. Its website also features articles and videos on hair styles, salons and stylists.

eggplant
Test Automation Software

Reduce average render
start time by 40% and
download times by 20%

“We couldn’t be happier with the result. We set out to deliver a better experience to customers and, with Eggplant’s help, that’s what we’ve achieved. We’re still planning to make further improvements, and our developers are working through Eggplant’s full list of recommendations.”

SPENCER HUDSON, INTERNET TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS MANAGER, GHD

Solution

ghd had invested considerable resources into the **ghdhair.com** website and wanted to make sure it was getting the most out of its investment. So, ghd asked Eggplant to perform a Web Performance Health Check using its Performance Analyzer and performance monitoring tools.



The nature of ghd's business meant that a stylish, visually appealing website was essential, and they were confident that the site they'd built was both attractive and easy to use. They were happy with the look. They were happy with the functionality. But they were well aware that this was not the whole story. They were keen to provide the best possible experience to customers, and this meant making the site faster.

This involved:

- Crawling the entire ghd website with Eggplant's Performance Analyzer solution
- Monitoring the site's performance over a period of six months
- Ranking the ghd site against a number of its main competitors

Consistent, reliable results were essential, and Eggplant's carefully controlled connectivity meant that results were unaffected by ISP slowdowns or fluctuations in exchange performance.

At the same time, Performance Analyzer's range of powerful tools helped to provide:

- Information on the biggest, slowest, and worst performing pages
- Details of render times and other key metrics
- Detailed recommendations to improve performance

Eggplant's review revealed that page size was having a massive impact on performance. Visual impact was key to the ghd site, and it contained a lot of imagery. Average page size was around 1,700kB, while average total download time on a 2Mbps connection ranged from 8.83 seconds to 8.96 seconds. Overall performance also lagged behind competitor sites.

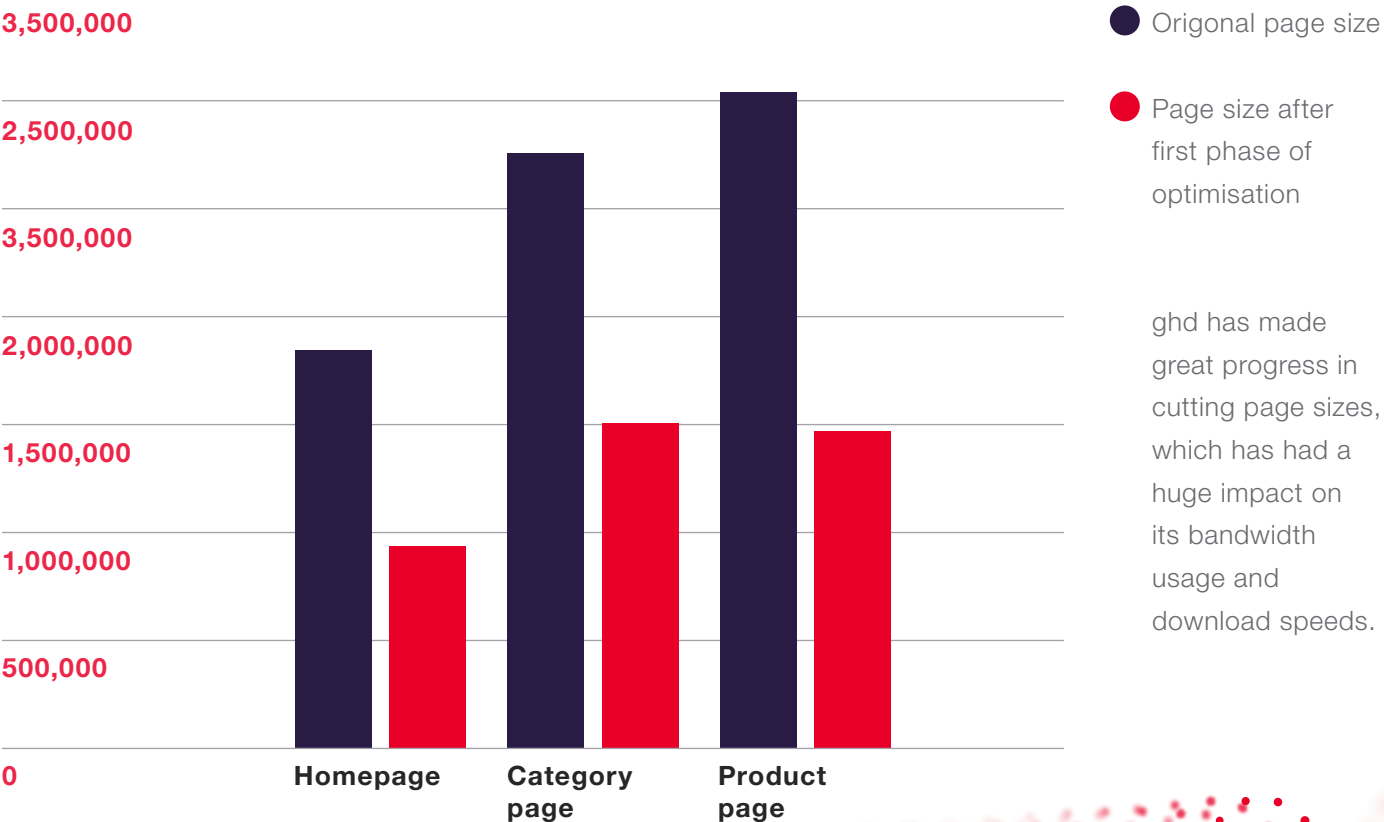
Results

It was clear from the outset that ghd were fully engaged in the process and understood the importance of performance optimization. So when Eggplant made its recommendations, ghd immediately went to work on implementing them. To get the most out of the process, ghd made sure that all interested parties were involved. These included senior ghd management, as well as representatives from third-party partners, all of whom were there when Eggplant presented its conclusions.

Image optimisation was a priority, since it was thought that this would deliver some of the biggest benefits. At the same time, ghd did not want to compromise on visual appeal, and Eggplant was able to show ghd how to achieve drastically reduced file sizes with no noticeable loss of quality. It also carried out a number of other recommendations, such as Gzipping text files.

The results were striking:

- Average total download times fell by **20%**.
- Average render start time fell from **1.1 seconds** to an impressive **0.64 seconds**.
- Average page size fell by **24%**.
- The site's performance was now on a par with — and in many cases better than — the competition's



ghd has made great progress in cutting page sizes, which has had a huge impact on its bandwidth usage and download speeds.

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