Distil Networks
Customer Success Story

On the House – Australia
Background

Onthehouse.com.au is Australia’s only free property research portal with property data on over 98% of Australian properties. The site uniquely combines historical property data (sold prices, rental prices, etc.) with a calculated value based on recent sales and trends for similar properties in the area. Additionally, Onthehouse.com.au provides details on properties currently for sale or rent.

In the last 12 months, over 36 million property reports have been downloaded by consumers from Onthehouse.com.au. These free reports allow consumers to research the sales history of a property, analyze comparative properties and monitor the performance of their own properties over time.

The Challenge

Bot Traffic AND Content Theft of Property Information

In the real estate industry, the thirst for property information is growing exponentially amongst consumers. Homeowners and those preparing their home for sale who are increasingly researching properties that are not on the market for sale or rent. The Onthehouse.com.au model of providing this information for free to the Australian public fulfills this increasing need, resulting in a sharp increase in traffic and engagement on their site.

Given the depth of information that Onthehouse.com.au provides, and the difficulty and cost involved in obtaining and aggregating this data legally, web scraping is a constant threat to their business model. Indeed, any website with a similar business model where accurate, legally obtained content is available publicly is going to have to deal with bots. Onthehouse.com.au was not using any external bot protection service prior to implementing the Distil Networks solution. Through regular monitoring and log analyses, Onthehouse noticed levels of activity and patterns of traffic from certain regions and during periods of the day that did not make sense for their user base of humans. At first they attempted to build a solution in-house using rate limits and blocking IP addresses. This in-house effort consumed resources. After auditing their traffic again, it was revealed that their efforts were easily evaded by web scrapers. At this point the team at Onthehouse.com.au realized they could not keep up with the bots and like their firewall and antivirus software, they would have to look for a provider with specialized expertise in bot detection, a solution that did not rely on IP addresses and rate limiting to identify suspected bot traffic.
Malicious bots made tens of thousands requests from hundreds of IPs that are primarily used by consumers.

Malicious bots using consumer ISPs means simply blocking IPs will block legitimate human traffic.

Solution

Onthehouse found Distil Networks while researching bot blocking solutions with multiple methods for identifying bots. “We wanted a basic SaaS model service with a solution that was quick to implement,” said Arun Thenabadu, CTO of Onthehouse.com.au. “Distil offered that service and after an initial ‘proof of concept’ phase, we signed up with them. Throughout the POC phase, as well as the final execution, the Distil team maintained a very detailed yet collaborative presence in ensuring our success with their solution. This flexibility in their approach helped the implementation to roll out smoothly, and without any major delays or issues.”

After installing Distil, it became obvious why their in house solution failed — one bot alone was making single page requests from more than 1,000 IP addresses. Their team realized that blocking 1,000 IP addresses is unmanageable and detecting a bot based on a single page request was impossible with their resources. Onthehouse was surprised to learn that over 75% of their malicious traffic was from within their own country — not from the usual suspects of China or Russia. Additionally, over 20% of the bad bot traffic was immediately detected by Distil’s Known Violator database and Onthehouse.com.au did not need to do any additional analysis.

The Benefits

Since implementing the Distil service, Onthehouse.com.au has benefitted from having an undoubtedly more effective solution than their initial manual alternative. “The Distil Networks service already had established a set of rules to ensure we are blocking the bots that are dangerous to our organization. We are benefiting from Distil’s known bots signature database,” said Thenabadu. “We have found that a mixture of what Distil immediately provides as well as their adjustable detection methods and customizable mitigation options, create an optimal environment for what our business needs at this time.”
About Distil Networks

Distil Networks is the global leader in Bot detection and mitigation offering the first software-as-a-service solution focused on stopping automated attacks to make the web more secure. Distil works like a protective shield and blocks malicious bots, malware, and competitors that try to scrape or copy your website data without permission. Prevent web scraping, eliminate form spam and click fraud, reduce infrastructure costs, and regain your competitive advantage with Distil Networks.

The company also publishes the annual
Bad Bot Landscape Report.

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http://www.distilnetworks.com

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