

WHY YOU NEED AN ICP LICENSE

Your First Step to Online Success in China

In today's world, speed is an important factor for business success and especially for online websites. Fast load speed of your website provides users with an optimal experience, enhances SEO rankings, and prevents users from exiting your website due to poor response time.

From a marketer's perspective, you can think of fast website load speed as an invisible fence that helps to keep users grazing on your online property, rather than wandering off in different directions. From there you can direct your audience and gently push them towards your call-to-action. This, in turn, leads to increased clicks, signups, sales, and hopefully more revenue!



Reduce latency and improve load speed with overseas web hosting or CDN



An ICP license is mandatory to access China web hosting or CDN

CDN and Overseas Hosting

Given the globally interconnected nature of the Internet, load speed and user experience for users outside of your hosting location is important. However, global deployment of your website or web application adds an extra dimension of difficulty.

You obviously want to continue providing the same optimal experience to your users - with fast load speed and low latency - but to do so will require the provisioning of additional infrastructure.

Content Delivery Networks (CDN) and overseas hosting exist as preferred and cost-effective tools to solve this challenge. Both help

to reduce latency and improve load speed with overseas web hosting or CDNs, allowing users in Asia, for example, to access the same user experience as users based in the U.S.

However, when deploying on a CDN or purchasing overseas hosting there are two distinctly separate markets to consider. There's the international market, and then there's the **Chinese market**.

It is important for international companies to approach China as its own market or ecosystem, not because of language or cultural factors, but because of China's

unique ICT environment. China's ICT environment is very different in the way it is regulated and managed, while large enough in terms of users to warrant a specialized approach. The most common challenge for

international organizations wishing to establish an online presence in the Chinese market is obtaining an ICP license, which is a legal requirement to access web hosting or a CDN in China.

Before discussing further why you need an ICP registration, let's first understand 'what is an ICP license'.



ICP license number is displayed on your website footer

ICP Registration

ICP stands for Internet Content Provider, and an ICP license is a registration number that allows a website to operate on a Chinese hosting server. You can test if a website has a Chinese ICP license by checking the website footer. You

will notice that our international website does not have an ICP license number displayed in the footer, but our [Chinese website](#) hosted in China and serving the domestic market does.

Chinese ICP License Categories

ICP licenses for China are issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) and are divided into two certification categories:

- **ICP Filing ('Bei'An' in Chinese):** An ICP Filing, also sometimes known as a 'recordal' in English, is the first level of ICP certification that applicants must apply for. After obtaining an ICP Filing, websites that are purely informational and not commercial in the form of direct sales can host their website

or access a CDN in China under this license.

- **ICP Commercial License ('Zheng' in Chinese):** The ICP Commercial License is the second category of ICP certification and allows websites that are online platforms or third-party sellers of goods and services to host their website or access a CDN in China. To apply for an ICP Commercial License, you must first obtain an ICP Filing.



Domains not following content laws can be blacklisted

Why do I need a Chinese ICP License?

As mentioned, ICP registration is a mandatory legal requirement set by the Chinese Government for accessing web hosting or CDN services in China. Also, your domain could be at the risk of being

blacklisted for not abiding to the Chinese content laws.

While Chinese netizens will still be able to access your website if it is hosted outside of China, they will



Hosting your website in China can boost SEO results

experience high latency and slow load speed. Fast website load speed is crucial anywhere in the world, especially in a mobile-centric market such as China where the Internet connection is not as fast compared to other countries. In 2017, China ranked 134th for average download speed (1.55 megabytes per second), whereas the United States ranked 21 (20 megabytes per second) according to a Cable.co.uk study.¹ The lack of peering points creates backlogs, thereby leading to slower Internet speed. On top of this, China's 710+ million Internet users are dispersed across vast geographic distances and certain rural areas still rely on 2G

networks. Having in-country web infrastructure is therefore highly recommended to overcome or minimize these challenges.

Hosting your website in China will also provide significant benefits to your SEO efforts. Chinese search engines allocate favorable weighting to websites hosted in China (that have an ICP license) in their search results and discriminate against those who host overseas. Having your website hosted in China communicates to the search engine that your content is tailored and relevant to the Chinese audience.

Obtaining an ICP registration can help unlock the Chinese market for foreign companies, and although it adds an extra level of administrative complexity, it is certainly a worthwhile investment if you are focusing on long-term online success in China.

Contact Alibaba Cloud to learn more about our cloud services and solutions for China.

References

1. Cable.co.uk 2017, <https://www.cable.co.uk/media-centre/release/New-Worldwide-Broadband-Speed-League-Unveiled-UK-Ranks-31>