pixitmedia
by DataCore

All Joined Up:
Object Matrix at
Halo Post

CASE STUDY

How the addition of nearline storage from Pixitmedia helped one of London's top post houses to work more efficiently and create new revenue streams.

Background

Based in London's Soho, Halo Post Production provides film and TV producers with a full range of post-production facilities from online, dubbing and grade to remote editing, workflow, and technical services.

Founded in 2004 by chief executive, mixer and sound designer John Rogerson as a one-room audio post facility, it has since grown into a full picture and sound company with five sites that works across factual, drama, and comedy programmes as well as feature films. Hugely popular with clients, with a reputation for friendliness and technical excellence, **Halo** was crowned the UK's Best Post Production House at the 2016 Broadcast Awards.

Recent credits include the comedies Toast of London (C4), The Delivery Man (ITV) and Murder in Successville (BBC3), factual productions Great Barrier Reef with David Attenborough (BBC1) and This is Tottenham (BBC2), and feature films The Danish Girl, Suffragette and Ronaldo.

"It was becoming increasingly difficult for us to share large data sets efficiently across Halo. This could delay the start of small jobs, not always allowing ust to maximise spare capacity in the schedule efficiently. What we needed was to eliminate these islands of information and install an integrated network where media was available for all from one central location."

Daniel Napier
Technical Director, Halo

Challenge

Back in 2014, following significant growth, **Halo** found itself becoming more and more successful. However, as each department expanded to cope with additional workloads, the network and storage requirements were increasing without the systems in place to meet that demand. Disparate storage systems meant the company's architecture had become fragmented. When projects moved from department to department, the media would need to be copied backwards and forwards. This was time-consuming and was costing the company valuable time and money. Something had to change.

Halo's Technical Director, Daniel Napier's first task was to upgrade the internal network. The second was to look at the storage that was attached to it.

The Solution

Having added a 56 Gigabit Production backbone and multiple 10 Gigabit Ethernet networks to the facility, and purchased additional ISIS storage from Avid, Napier turned his attention to nearline storage.

A legacy system, that had been installed when the company was much smaller, was in place but that had been outgrown "in terms of size, bandwidth, and flexibility."

Available space, says Napier, was a big issue. With larger codecs, the increased data that comes with handling UHD formats, and ever-swelling shooting ratios, and the volume of media being delivered by clients was on the up. As a result, additional fast access storage space was required for all departments.

Ahead of choosing a nearline system for the job, Napier and his team drew up a list of priorities.
The storage needed to be:

- Scalable and upgradable to allow for further growth, and that flexibility needed to be cost-effective;

- Simple to use, particularly for non-technical staff, with a clean user interface that was easy to manage;

- More than just storage, offering tools for other tasks;

- Secure, with the ability to control who can and cannot access it;

- Able to provide a great price-performance ratio;

- Capable of generating new streams of revenue for the facility.

"We pride ourselves on being a trusted storage partner to our clients. Stating that is easy but, as with Halo, our continuing focus on solving IP workflow challenges coupled with our investment in the development of solutions to solve those challenges prove that PixitmediaObject Matrix is more than just a storage company."

Peter Watling
Sales Director, Pixitmedia

"There are lots of people offering affordable storage out there. You can buy a petabyte of storage for £60k but, at that price, it is slow because it doesn't have the bandwidth. Object Matrix is at a good level where multiple nodes are separate and load balanced, with 20GigE links to your network, so it has a great performance and it's also good value for money. You get fast storage with extras on top."

Daniel Napier
Technical Director, Halo

Having researched the available options, taken a trip to IBC to ask further questions, and then reviewed their findings, Halo decided in November 2014 to invest in a 256 TB Object Matrix from Pixitmedia, supplied by reseller Altered Images.

These extras include disaster recovery options, with software that allows users to sync between tools, plus the ability to do LTO back-ups with an integrated library directly from Object Matrix and the DropSpot metadata logging tool.

"Dumb storage is not where things are going," says Napier. "You need creative tools that allow you to become more efficient and can help you generate new streams of revenue. The LTO option was particularly interesting because back-ups had been difficult to manage in the past. With the XenData plug-in, this process is now centrally located, is easy for the end-user and we have developed this into a much more efficient service for our clients. At the same time, DropSpot gives us the ability to handle large amounts of media and find it easily."

The Workflow

Object Matrix was installed in February 2015 and has, in Napier's words, "Made massive improvements to the facility. It has eliminated our islands and it has made us more efficient than ever before."

It is being used daily across all departments as a central repository for all incoming media.

As soon as footage arrives it is copied onto a Object Matrix vault where a native copy is stored. For the offline editing process, the media is then transcoded from the Object Matrix at high speed. In some cases clients can also take up the offer of a second vault, giving them extra security. The footage is then backed up from Object Matrix to LTO tapes where required.
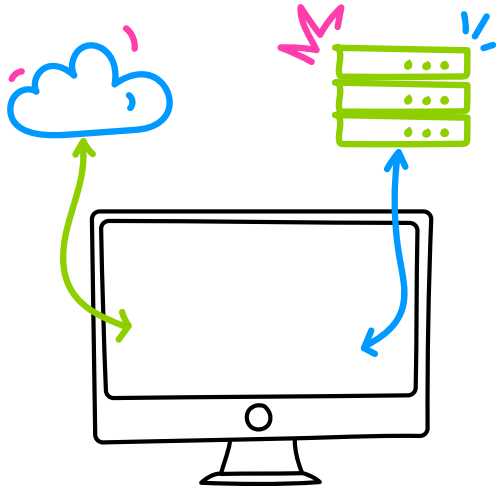
From that point Object Matrix is used for work-in-progress, to park ISIS projects, as a portal for moving assets from one suite to another suite quickly, and as a more affordable place than Tier 1 storage to keep media for short durations.

The Future

Napier is quick to praise Object Matrix, and Pixitmedia, and is already looking to the future with Disaster Recovery a continuing area of focus.

"Pixitmedia has some unique disaster recovery mirroring tools and, in the future, we might use them not just for mirroring Object Matrix but potentially other storage in the facility too."

Halo may also look at dovetailing Object Matrix with a future MAM system to automate the creation of deliverables, and there is a good chance that the size and scope of the current Object matrix will be increased to more than a petabyte to aid natural growth and those disaster recovery-based services.

Napier also hopes to work with Pixitmedia on developing the product further.

"From the initial engagement with Halo it was clear that the relationship would be collaborative, technical, and driven towards building a platform to serve the future as well as meeting current requirements," he says.

halo is independent and owned by the same people that started the company and still work there day in, day out. We believe this connection creates a unique level of care, commitment and attention that is rarely found nowadays. Our continued success underpins a conviction that clients get something at halo that they don't get elsewhere. **halopost.com**

Pixitmedia by DataCore, is a leading provider of intelligent content and metadata management solutions for the media and entertainment industry. We go beyond storage to deliver a smarter ecosystem for media workflows, with end-to-end solutions that combine high-performance file, nearline, and archive platforms with metadata enrichment, indexing, and search. Enabled by data orchestration tools, our multi-tier technology simplifies content management and migration to ensure media assets are always where our customers need them.

Pixitmedia's innovative solutions integrate seamlessly into existing M&E workflows, optimizing efficiency and collaboration at every level - from ingest to archive to delivery. With Pixitmedia, content is always searchable, secure, and available whenever it's required.

For further insights, visit:

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