



CASE STUDY

BuzzFeed's Branded Creative Team Supercharges Branded Content Production with StorNext

BuzzFeed needed a shared storage system to keep up with production schedules for its branded content campaigns. The answer was a Quantum StorNext appliance-based system that combines storage area network (SAN) with network-attached storage (NAS) and preserves flexible options for future growth.

BuzzFeed



FEATURED PRODUCTS



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Richard Klopfenstein
Post Production Technologist, BuzzFeed



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Dan Munger – Video Technology Manager, BuzzFeed

BuzzFeed

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- StorNext® system
 - Xcellis® Workflow Director with StorNext software and NAS license
 - Quantum QXS™ RAID array
 - StorNext Connect management
- Brocade 6505 16 Gb Fibre switch
- Cisco 9300 10 GbE switch

KEY BENEFITS

- Collaborative data sharing dramatically reduces the time needed to create and reuse content for branded content.
- Support for NAS and SAN interfaces provides an optimal combination of performance and value.
- Appliance approach simplifies purchase, installation, and ongoing management, reducing administrative overhead.
- Test laboratory hosted by integrator partner IMT provided a fast way to test the system with real data in real-world conditions.
- StorNext Connect provides an intuitive way to monitor the whole system and its components to maximize performance and uptime.
- Independent scaling of performance and capacity, and support for archiving provide flexibility to meet future needs while keeping costs low.

BuzzFeed is the world's leading tech-powered media company, with a cross-platform news and entertainment network that reaches millions of people globally and constantly changes the way it finds and shares information. It mixes news and entertainment that spreads very quickly across different platforms, especially social media. BuzzFeed's growth and success are the product of a set of very conscious business decisions aimed at keeping the company dynamic, fresh, and relevant while relentlessly using data and sophisticated metrics to shape its future and support its branded partners.

BuzzFeed content is viewed 9 billion times each month across a variety of platforms including BuzzFeed.com, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram.

VIDEO EMERGES AS KEY DELIVERY ELEMENT FOR BRANDED PARTNER ADS

One of the important production tasks for BuzzFeed is helping its brand partners create compelling video ad content that can be shown

across BuzzFeed's platforms. Branded content is an important element in the BuzzFeed experience, so it is important that it look and feel like the quality content that its audience expects from BuzzFeed. To help make that happen, BuzzFeed provides top-tier creative and production services for its brand partners.

As the company was planning to move the BuzzFeed studio to a new facility in Los Angeles, they realized it was time to upgrade the video production system used by the Branded Creative Team to provide more streamlined workflow and easier, faster collaboration. The old workflow system was based largely on individual workstations with local storage, which meant that to collaborate, editors had to move files on removable drives from workstation to workstation. This hindered sharing between members of the creative team, slowed production, and made it difficult to review content in real time with clients.

LOOKING AT ALTERNATIVES FOR SHARED STORAGE

The team knew they needed a shared storage system to improve workflow, so they evaluated several different approaches and spent nearly two months creating a proof-of-concept test for a NAS-based workflow solution. The experience with that system, including its performance and scalability limitations, led the team to remain open to alternatives. They looked to IMT—a Los Angeles area integrator with extensive experience in helping digital media organizations modernize workflows—for help in selecting the best solution. “IMT suggested that we look at Quantum StorNext, but we were reluctant at first,” explains Dan Munger, Video Technology Manager at BuzzFeed. “We thought of it as being SAN only and complex to set up and manage. Part of what we are committed to doing is getting technology that supports our model—and that means avoiding solutions that require lots of admin time.”

TEST LAB MAKES EVALUATION FAST AND EASY

IMT revealed that StorNext offered more solutions than the BuzzFeed team realized. “We explained that StorNext now supports a NAS interface as well as SAN and that it was based on an appliance approach that was easy to install and support,” says Joe Marchitto, IMT’s Director of Systems Architecture. Even though the option sounded interesting, BuzzFeed did not want to spend another two months evaluating the product. “That was where the IMT Lab came into play,” says Dan. “IMT said we could test the system with our data in their lab and they could set it up in a day.” The results of the experiment convinced the team that StorNext was the right choice, and they made the decision to move ahead.

STORNEXT ENABLES COLLABORATIVE WORKFLOW

The new BuzzFeed Branded Creative Team solution includes StorNext Xcellis Workflow Director—an appliance that hosts the StorNext

software—288 TB of disk storage, 10 GbE NAS connections used by some 25 editing workstations, and 16 Gb Fibre Channel connections for the high-performance finishing work. The new system holds all the work in progress, provides bandwidth for transcoding, and has the capacity to store finished work, making it easy to reuse existing content for new ads.

IMT and Quantum’s solution instantly improved the way branded content is created and managed. “Quantum StorNext shared storage has dramatically increased our productivity by letting our editors collaborate in real time, so they can focus on creative ideas instead of fighting with technical limitations,” said Richard Klopfenstein, Post Production Technologist. “StorNext gives us the high-performance transfer speeds and playback resilience we need to deliver content to our clients on schedule. By removing any user experience issues, it directly increases our ability to delight our clients. At the end of the day, our users 100% prefer Quantum to the previous workflow.”

ONGOING RELIABILITY AND MANAGEABILITY CRITICAL

The overall reliability of the StorNext environment has been an important bonus for BuzzFeed’s Branded Creative Team, minimizing admin overhead while keeping productivity high and controlling costs. Richard explains, “StorNext’s reliability is a must-have in our 24-hour production cycle. Quantum keeps our systems up for months with minimum maintenance, and that keeps our IT costs low, too.”

A key management benefit is StorNext Connect, an administrative tool that simplifies installation and provides operational data about the storage systems. Its GUI discovers storage and network resources, monitors overall system performance, and provides details on individual components, including health checks and information about latency and loading. Reports are automatically generated and proactively delivered to

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Jason Kranitz,
SVP Sales, IMT

ABOUT BUZZFEED

BuzzFeed is the world’s leading tech-powered media company, with a cross-platform news and entertainment network that reaches hundreds of millions of people globally. The company produces articles, lists, quizzes, videos, original series, and brands including Tasty, the world’s largest social food network. The company is also home to BuzzFeed News, a global news organization focused on original reporting and investigative journalism; and BuzzFeed Commerce, which develops social commerce products and experiences, as well as licensing and other strategic partnerships.



administrators and the service team to make sure that any issues are discovered and resolved as quickly as possible.

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FLEXIBILITY PROTECTS AGAINST FUTURE CHANGES

BuzzFeed, along with its branded content business, has enjoyed significant success because it has evolved in unexpected directions quickly while competitors stagnated. The team expects that the future will bring more surprises, making StorNext’s flexibility especially important. “New technology constantly becomes available in new media, and Quantum provides consistent updates and support

to give us flexibility in our workflow,” said Hilary Kempkers, Sr. Manager of Branded Creative Post Production for BuzzFeed. “Clients consistently ask for the above-and-beyond, so flexibility is key!”

StorNext is designed to scale easily to meet a wide range of potential changing demands, including archive options on disk, tape, and the cloud. Dan Munger says, “Investing in Quantum’s StorNext long-term gives our department the scalability to tackle huge projects with confidence, and provides predictability for our users and our clients, no matter what the future brings.”

ABOUT IMT

Integrated Media Technologies, Inc. (IMT) is a consulting, design, and systems integration company with offices in Los Angeles, Boston, and Dallas that specializes in providing business consulting and TCO models for private, hybrid, and public cloud workflow solutions. IMT serves the telecommunications, media & entertainment, institutional, and enterprise sectors with a broad range of solutions designed to drive new value and efficiencies from technology. Customers rely on IMT to deliver mission-critical solutions and services focused on media technologies, storage, asset management, high-performance computing, networking, and 24/7 support. IMT’s operations are segmented into three principal businesses: Consulting and Systems Integration Business, Video Collaboration, and IT Services. *Inc. Magazine* ranked IMT as the 25th fastest growing private company in the Technology Services industry.

ABOUT QUANTUM

Quantum is a leading expert in scale-out tiered storage, archive and data protection. The company’s StorNext® platform powers modern high-performance workflows, enabling seamless, real-time collaboration and keeping content readily accessible for future use and re-monetization. More than 100,000 customers have trusted Quantum to address their most demanding content workflow needs, including top studios, major broadcasters and cutting-edge content creators. With Quantum, customers have the end-to-end storage platform they need to manage assets from ingest through finishing and into delivery and long-term preservation. See how at www.quantum.com/customerstories.

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