Quantum

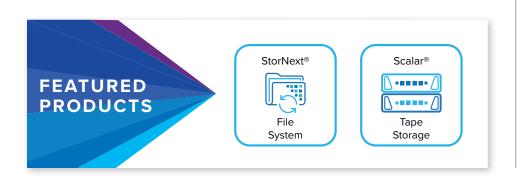# Quantum's StorNext Solution Helps a52 Take VFX and Animation Workflows to the Next Level

Visual effects (VFX) and animation technologies continue to become more sophisticated, allowing artists and filmmakers to create stunning backdrops, life-like characters, and vivid images for their story worlds. For a52—a high-end computer graphics (CG) and VFX company—creation of these story worlds depends on a backend infrastructure that will support large, high-resolution media files, simultaneous access, and a high-performance workflow for their creative professionals. By implementing Quantum's StorNext File System with H4000 and F2000 appliances, QXS storage, and Scalar Tape Libraries, a52 has implemented end-to-end solutions that increase collaboration between artists while accelerating post-production work and gaining scalability for the future.

In the filmmaking world, creative professionals strive to bring the fantastic to life through visual effects. VFX technology allows them to create a world filled with people, objects, creatures, and scenery that otherwise cannot exist in a live-action film.

"I've known Quantum for a long time. The engineering behind the product is very mature, very solid. And when we need it, we get first class support from their support team."

Kevin Bass
VP of Engineering
a52

FEATURED PRODUCTS

StorNext®
File System

Scalar®
Tape Storage

> "Other storage systems seem like they are rebranded over and over. Stability and speed are the reasons we stick with Quantum StorNext."
>
> **Kevin Bass**
> VP of Engineering, a52

The team at a52 describes the work they do this way: "In the field of visual effects, greatness of craft is sometimes magical and many times intentionally impossible to see."

In many ways, technology infrastructure is similar. The technology at work behind the scenes may be invisible to the artists, but it is no less important to the creation of their art. This includes servers, workstations, software, and storage.

With a growing demand for content, VFX artists are creating more shots for their projects, and content volumes are growing. As a result, VFX workflows require high-performance storage as well as shared access to foster collaboration between artists.

As VFX technology has grown more sophisticated and studios are incorporating more VFX content in their storytelling, a52 needed to refresh its infrastructure to provide their artists with faster compute resources that would support their production tasks and handle a growing volume of high-resolution files.

Being a long-time Quantum customer, a52 chose to implement the Quantum StorNext File System with H4000 and F2000 appliances along with Quantum's QXS storage array to provide the increased power their artists needed. And to support archiving of completed projects in a secure, cost-effective way, a52 implemented Quantum Scalar Tape Libraries.

StorNext is a software-defined file system and data management platform that is designed for video and high-resolution media files. It provides high performance and scalability, which enables a52's artists to work with detailed images and create many VFX shots for their films.

"Other storage systems seem like they are rebranded over and over," said Kevin Bass, vice president of Engineering at a52. "Stability and speed are the reasons we stick with Quantum StorNext."

High-Performance Centralized Storage

As the team at a52 evaluated its storage needs, speed and capacity were two of their top priorities. Their artists needed to be able to work with large, uncompressed files and to perform a variety of tasks that include editing, color grading, and effects rendering. Additionally, they required the system to be fast and responsive.

But there was a challenge. The storage system needed to provide increased capacity and speed without requiring more power or physical space. "Being located in Santa Monica, we have limited space and power," Bass said. "As a result, we had a power, space, density requirement as part of growing our storage."

According to Bass, this was one the key factors that really attracted the team to the Quantum technology. "The F2000 is some of the fastest storage out there," he said. "The Quantum solution is very dense, which means a smaller footprint that is less energy intensive, but still maintains high speed and performance. This is what drew us to the product."

Increased Collaboration And Productivity

Growing demand for VFX content has led to increased business for a52. The number of artists and creative professionals on their team has grown, making the need for shared access to files even more important to the company.

StorNext enables a52 to support multiple artists working with the same files on the same projects simultaneously without breaking up projects across different volumes— something that was a challenge just a few years before. "In the past, if there were 10 or 12 artists working on the same project at the same time, we would have to split things up or it wouldn't work," Bass said. "But now, it's not a problem. We can maintain 4K multi-stream playback without spreading files across different volumes and file systems."

> "We see Quantum as being on the same page as we are, investing in the technology and capabilities we need to support our clients."
>
> **Kevin Bass**
> VP of Engineering
> a52

For a52, fast access to shared files and the ability to support multiple users simultaneously increases productivity and fosters more collaboration between artists.

Enabling Fast 4K Streaming Performance

Another reason a52 refreshed its storage infrastructure was to position the company to serve the growing needs of its clients. The need to support multi-stream 4K playback was one example. "We never want to tell a client that we can't do something," Bass said.

StorNext with F2000 appliances allows artists to work efficiently with 4K files and provides the high-performance needed to support multi-stream 4K playback. This has helped a52 better serve its clients, and increase the company's reputation as a leader in the VFX industry.

"We always have to get creative to serve our clients, and Quantum has always been very creative with us to make sure we're able to do that," said Bass.

ABOUT a52

For nearly a quarter century, a52 has been redefining what is possible in VFX. With offices in Santa Monica, California, and New York, a52 has become a long-time home for the industry's most innovative and talented artists, all of whom live to push the envelope and deliver outstanding and award-winning visual storytelling.

At the heart of the studio is a52's collaborations with top directors, agencies and clients which continue to grow and evolve over time. This focused and individualized attention that a52's artists and production team bring to every project and relationship garnered the studio the title of 2020 & 2021 VFX Company of the Year by Shots.

Quantum.