



StorNext & Scalar Series

Government Media Services Group Makes No Secret About the Benefits of StorNext for Government Video

Supplying rich media content to government organizations that operate under the strictest code of secrecy can be challenging. Media Services Center recognized that problems with collaboration, backup, and scalability were making its job difficult. However, since deploying Quantum StorNext, Media Services Center has become a much more efficient and effective partner for the intelligence community.

PREVIOUS VIDEO PRODUCTION PROCESS WAS SLOW AND UNRELIABLE

Media Services Center (MSC) is responsible for video post-production, distribution, and print media services. For more than a decade, MSC has provided rich media and broadcast services to its own top-secret agency, as well as other partners in the intelligence community. The staff for the 50-member unit includes videographers, photographers, graphic designers, animators, web designers, producers, and directors.

Keith LeValley is the systems administrator in charge of the technology infrastructure that enables MSC's artistic staff to create and deliver its work. The most widely used product is a daily television show that is beamed to the desktops of the agency's many remotely located employees throughout the world.

"It's pretty much the standard for everyone to go to the daily broadcast to get a fast overview of different developments within the intelligence community," LeValley says. "These are short stories that are continually reported on and updated throughout the day in 15-minute segments."

With a large archive of B-roll and many common elements among stories, having producers work together would have streamlined video production and improved the quality of the show. But collaboration rarely occurred.

"If two producers were working on two projects, they were on their own workstation drives and didn't have the flexibility to pick up on each other's work or share material," says LeValley. "Because everyone was working on a separate drive, they had to grab

the archive material they needed, ingest it to their personal drive, and then re-encode whenever they needed something they had used in a prior project. It was a tremendous waste of time."

In addition to the barriers to collaboration, there was no formal backup strategy or system; just a loose collection of UNIX scripts that provided chronological backups—when they worked. If a drive crashed in the middle of a project, the producer had to start over, reassembling all of the project files from scratch.

"We urged people to make DVD copies of their work because we felt the system we had in place was so unreliable," LeValley says.

A third problem was the lack of scalable storage. When video production activity increased at MSC, there was an explosion of data growth, especially as animators added coding to the videos. What started out as a few gigabytes grew to hundreds of gigabytes and then flew past the terabyte mark. The direct-attached storage for servers filled rapidly, and there was no easy or affordable way to expand capacity.

"We used to call it playing data checkers," LeValley says. "We would move data around from file system to file system to make space for something new that was being worked on. It was a huge issue."

OTHER SOLUTIONS FALL SHORT OF STORNEXT'S VIDEO WORKFLOW CAPABILITIES

MSC experimented with several solutions before discovering the advantages provided by StorNext. Originally an Avid shop, LeValley says MSC tried



MEDIA SERVICES CENTER

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SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- Quantum StorNext® Scale-out Storage
- Quantum Scalar® Tape Library with four LTO drives

KEY BENEFITS

- **Enables collaboration and shared access** by multiple producers on ongoing projects
- **Speeds up video production workflows** and increases efficiency
- **Reduces time to produce daily broadcasts** by almost two hours per day
- **Simplifies challenges of data growth** with easy scalability
- **Provides reliable, automated backup** with policy-driven tiering features
- **Saves a half day's production time** on larger projects due to efficiencies of StorNext file sharing

Avid Unity MediaNetwork but eventually needed to move away from it once Apple's platform was no longer supported.

Next, MSC tried Charismac's FibreShare, but it did not solve the collaboration problem.

"We used it for a year-and-a-half but soon realized we had made a mistake," LeValley says. "In their system, you assign volumes to users, and they can't be shared with another user without copying them. We wanted software that would allow file-level locking, not volume-level locking."

Working with reseller Keeper Technology, MSC next turned to StorNext. Implementing StorNext solved the collaboration and scalability issues. In addition, pairing it with a Quantum Scalar tape library with four LTO drives gave MSC the backup infrastructure it needed.

"What I like about StorNext is you set it and forget it," LeValley says. "Once you set up your relations, the file system scales with the growth in rich media files. The only thing you have to worry about is having enough hardware to support those demands."

STORNEXT DATA MANAGEMENT SPEEDS UP WORKFLOWS AND INCREASES PRODUCTIVITY

Today, working collaboratively is second nature at MSC. StorNext's high-speed file sharing technology gives multiple producers access to both materials and projects, improving speed and efficiency. In fact, editors and producers assigned to continually update the 15-minute daily broadcast now save about two hours per day compared to the time it took before StorNext was deployed.

Finding the right B-roll on disk and incorporating it into a project is also much faster than when producers had to find the right tape and ingest the selected files. Using StorNext, all video clips are captured digitally and shared so tapes no longer need to be encoded each time they are copied for use. On larger projects, MSC estimates it saves about half a day's worth of production time due to increased efficiencies.

LeValley also appreciates the policy-driven tiering features found in StorNext Storage Manager. Scheduled archiving allows automated backup to the Scalar tape library.

"I used to hold my breath every day hoping that a backup would run successfully," he says. "Now I don't give it a second thought."

In addition, LeValley sees the advancements in StorNext as invaluable in helping manage how storage capacity is used. Large projects can be analyzed and employees can be educated about the need to avoid encoding everything, instead focusing on capturing the final delivered product.

Keeping everyone mindful of capacity is important, but because StorNext is architected to scale significantly, the technology has allowed the system to grow with MSC's needs. Initially, MSC implemented a 20TB file system with 40TB of tape storage. LeValley expects the next step to be a 90TB file system with 120TB tape capacity.

"This is not a big, sexy purchase for a company, but getting the right data management software is worth it," LeValley concludes. "StorNext just flat out works, and a SAN environment is the only way to go. It's easy to set up, easy to maintain, and well worth the investment."

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ABOUT MEDIA SERVICES CENTER

Media Services Center provides audio-visual services for a large agency within the intelligence community. Its specialty is a daily televised video on intelligence community issues that is shared within its agency and with external partners.

To learn more about how Quantum can help with video workflows, please visit www.quantum.com/stornext

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CS00185A-v03