Quantum®

Bruton Stroube Cuts Storage Demands Down to Size With Affordable StorNext Solution

When higher-resolution video formats suddenly ballooned its storage requirements, Bruton Stroube Studios needed a new solution fast. The organization liked Quantum StorNext, the standard for enterprise media storage, but thought it would cost too much. As it turned out, the best solution was just as affordable as less-proven options—and the transition was shockingly easy.

BRUTON ‖ STROUBE

FEATURED PRODUCTS

StorNext®

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>
> **James McKenzie**
> IT infrastructure manager, Bruton Stroube

BRUTON ‖ STROUBE

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- Xcellis® workflow storage system
- QXS™-412 RAID arrays, 144 TB usable
- Scalar® i3 LTO library

KEY BENEFITS

- High-performance shared access to common content streamlines workflow and optimizes schedules.
- High-capacity RAID arrays provide capacity to support 8K capture and editing cycles, and scalability to grow with future demands.
- Full compatibility with Xsan technology base preserves customer's investment in technology, applications, and processes.
- Support for Mac, Windows, and Linux platforms provides the widest range of options for applications.
- Experienced support team provides smooth transition with no downtime.
- Long-term commitment to digital media market ensures future support and enhancements.
- Option for automated archive to tape and the cloud provides alternatives for future storage demands while keeping costs low.

Bruton Stroube Studios, a creative production and post house in St. Louis, MO, has been telling stories through compelling images for over three decades for a client list that looks like a "Who's Who" of American consumer brands. The company started out offering still photography for advertising clients, which remains a mainstay of its business. In 2009, the founders decided to expand the organization's offerings to include motion video as well. The new capability quickly became an important part of the Bruton Stroube service package, taking the company into new projects, expanding its reach, and allowing the organization to provide clients with a wider range of services.

"Bruton Stroube is, above all, about giving our clients a complete set of visual solutions, and video has become an incredibly important part of that service," explains James McKenzie, Bruton Stroube IT infrastructure manager. "Today, we work on everything from ads and PSAs to short-form documentaries, and we provide a complete range of production, post-production, sound design, transcoding, and delivery services."

VIDEO DEMANDS STATE-OF-THE-ART WORKFLOW AND STORAGE

From the beginning, the company knew it needed video production quality that matched the high standards it set with its still photography, and that meant adopting and mastering technology changes quickly. "Video workflow and storage requirements are dramatically different than for still images, so we built our system from the ground up—changing it and growing along with the evolving technology," says McKenzie.

When lower-bitrate HD formats were adequate, the team adopted Mac platforms as its standard and local storage arrays supported the workflow. "Not very long ago, we used pro Canon cameras and swapped out 16 GB cards as we went along. Then, as resolutions and bitrates increased and we started shooting in 4K and RAW formats, we needed a beefier IT system to support it." At that point, the team added an Apple Xsan server and expanded to about 20 TB of storage capacity. "Xsan gave us shared high-performance Fibre Channel access to our content, and really made everything easier. But the camera technology pretty quickly outran what the system could do."

HIGHER-RESOLUTION FORMATS DRIVE NEED FOR NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

The demands of higher-resolution video formats created a crisis for the organization. "We went to the latest Red Epic-W cameras and started capturing everything in 6K or 8K—and we got swamped," recalls McKenzie. "Typical shoots were creating a couple of terabytes a day, and we needed way more space. Just moving capture formats from 6K to 8K doubled our storage needs." The team needed a new solution that could provide scalability, keep performance high, and maintain compatibility with Xsan. It also needed to be affordable.

Looking for alternatives, the Bruton Stroube IT team was concerned about having to make unwanted compromises. The Quantum StorNext® shared storage and advanced data management solution was its top choice, but the team wasn't sure it could afford that level of technology. "We knew that StorNext and Xsan had compatible technology, and we had already used StorNext licenses to integrate a Windows workstation for 3D projects into the Xsan environment. But we thought of StorNext as the ultimate enterprise solution, and didn't think a shop like ours—modest in size with three active edit stations—could possibly afford it."

THE BEST SOLUTION IS AFFORDABLE

To help determine the way forward, the IT team brought on an experienced storage integrator, BrightSource IT, and long-time collaborator,

Jason Knopp. BrightSource helped Bruton Stroube look at a wide range of alternatives, which were compared based on features, performance, and total cost. "Confidence in the supplier and their commitment to video over the long haul was also really important to us," McKenzie explains. "We felt more than a little stranded when some of our current suppliers shifted business models, leaving us without support or a growth path. We never wanted to go through that again."

Ultimately, the clear choice for Bruton Stroube was StorNext. The solution is fully compatible with Xsan and all of the applications used by the creative team. It offers high-speed, shared Fibre Channel access to multiple editors and seamless scalability, allowing systems to increase capacity and performance independently as demands change. It also allows the team to adapt different storage tiers to help manage costs in the future, thanks to Quantum's long-term commitment to the digital media market. The unexpected part was the affordable price point. "I was surprised," McKenzie notes. "We knew that StorNext was our first choice from a technical point of view, but were surprised when its cost was the same as other products that were much less powerful and less proven."

TRANSITION IS "SHOCKINGLY EASY"

The team ultimately selected a StorNext solution featuring the Xcellis workflow storage platform, QXS-series hybrid storage arrays, and Scalar i3

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IT infrastructure manager,
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tape library. "The StorNext solution we chose gives us everything we need today and includes lots of options for growth as our needs change," says McKenzie. Still, the team was apprehensive about the transition. "I was nervous about how well the integration was going to work. I wanted to avoid interrupting the production team's work, and didn't want to spend weeks preparing for the change and then more weeks afterwards tuning it."

As it turned out, the switchover went incredibly smooth. "The team from Quantum has done this dozens of times and knew exactly how to make it easy," says McKenzie. Over two to three days, the team prepared the site, installed the new hardware, and set the groundwork. "Then, they told us to go to lunch and that it would be ready in an hour. I was nervous. But when we returned, it was perfect—we had magically added about 72 TB to our existing volume and everything worked exactly as it had before. All the work in progress, the apps, everything. It was super impressive—and shockingly easy."

IMPECCABLE RELIABILITY AND PATH TO THE FUTURE

"The new StorNext system has given us everything we had hoped for," says McKenzie. "In the months since the system has been up and running, we haven't had a single second of downtime." The Bruton Stroube team is already planning to expand the system to increase its value. "We are considering moving all the work for the still images over to the StorNext SAN, and we want to add StorNext Storage Manager to the system to give us automated archiving. Today, we still do that manually or use a backup application. We already have a Quantum LTO library and would like that to become an automated tier in the workflow."

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