



StorNext & Scalar Series

StorNext Bridges Platforms, Integrates Archive at Leading Post-Production House

To deliver the high-quality creative content their clients demand, Optimus combines multiple, top-of-the-line applications across its video processing tasks. But sharing files between editors and re-using old content was time-consuming and difficult. Then Optimus found Quantum StorNext file system and archive solutions. The difference was like night and day.

DIFFERENT WORKFLOWS, DIFFERENT PRODUCTS COMPLICATE COLLABORATION

As a leading digital imaging post-production house, Optimus moves each video project through a complex series of creative and production steps to get to a final product. At any one moment, a project may be in the hands of designers, editors, or colorists using a wide range of applications on both Mac and Windows platforms.

The goal of Optimus was to optimize the entire workflow across all these tasks and platforms to maximize efficiency and reduce delays for the 100-person development and production team. A key challenge was that the steps in this pipeline were disjointed and manual, so it was time-consuming to enable collaboration. Individual departments were brought to a crawl waiting for tapes to be created and ingested, and digital files had to be copied and moved between workstations so different team members could work on them.

"The data would be on one machine, and then when the next person wanted to use it, he had to copy it to his machine," Director of Operations Knox McCormac says. "There was always the possibility of confusion about who had the latest version, and there were long delays while people copied these huge files."

CROSS-PLATFORM PERFORMANCE OF STORNEXT STANDS OUT

To solve the workflow problem, Optimus at first experimented with NAS filers and a proprietary SAN implementation, but they both fell short. The performance was too slow, compatibility between

Windows and Mac systems was a continuing problem, and the systems kept running out of capacity.

The solution for the Optimus workflow turned out to be Quantum StorNext® data management software, recommended by the M&E Professional Services group at Autodesk. StorNext creates a unified common storage environment that all the workstations can use, so instead of working from local copies scattered around different workstations, everyone uses the same resources. Autodesk worked closely with Optimus to deploy the solution, bringing both technical knowledge about Quantum's products and a helpful familiarity with the demands of post-production work and the challenges of multi-platform environments.

StorNext's performance is amazing.

Knox McCormac
Director of Operations, Optimus

"THE DIFFERENCE IS NIGHT AND DAY"

Today StorNext plays a critical role at Optimus.

"StorNext is the key to our end-to-end workflow," explains McCormac. "It lets everybody—both Mac and Windows users—see and work on the same set of files, so there's no more copying and moving big pieces of data, no more worrying about which the right file is. The time savings is huge, and it also dramatically reduces our disk needs. Before, if we had three editors working on a one-terabyte project, each one needed [his or her] own terabyte of disk.



Optimus

"With StorNext archiving, the files are safer, the process is automated, and we're reducing tape costs by 90% or more—for us that's thousands of dollars a month...This is a much better, and less expensive approach than keeping old work on spinning disk or in the cloud."

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Director of Operations, Optimus

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- Quantum StorNext File System and Storage Manager
- Quantum Scalar i6000 Tape Library
- Autodesk Smoke and Flames
- Filmlight Baselight
- Quantel EQ
- Apple Final Cut Pro
- Adobe After Effects
- Avid Media Composer

KEY BENEFITS

- Provides end-to-end workflow by sharing files across platforms
- Eliminates copying and moving files between workstations
- Saves time and reduces capacity requirement
- Protects data automatically and allows fast, easy re-use
- Reduces tape costs by 90% or more, saving thousands of dollars a month

Now they all use the same files, and we only need one terabyte of capacity. It's a great improvement."

The NAS performance limitations have also been eliminated.

"StorNext's performance is amazing," says McCormac. "It gives fibre-speed access from all of our platforms—we even do really critical jobs like creative playback for customer review from the common files. We couldn't be happier with both the performance and reliability."

"The people using StorNext will tell you the difference is night and day," he adds. "Because of the improved workflow, the designers, editors, and colorists don't have to spend a lot of time moving data between workstations and departments. They can now spend their time creating award-winning commercials for our clients. The clients are really unaware of it all—they just know they're getting the product they want when they want it."

STORNEXT ARCHIVE SAVES THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS A MONTH

Optimus recently expanded its StorNext installation to solve another major problem: how to store, protect, and re-use content from the hundreds of commercials processed each week. In the world of commercial production, it's critical to save and protect finished projects, but also to make it easy to access them again for re-use in future projects. In the old system, Optimus wrote each project off to its own, format-specific videotape and stored it offline. The costs were high and accessing the data was slow—each tape had to be manually retrieved and re-ingested in order to be used.

But all that changed when the company installed StorNext Storage Manager and a Scalar® i6000 LTO library. The new system created a separate, file-based storage area that includes two tiers—144TB of nearline disk and over a petabyte of archive capacity in the tape library. Now, finished projects are dropped to the nearline disk array, and StorNext automatically creates two copies—a primary and a backup copy—on digital tape in the library. A file-system presentation lets users see all the files from their workstations for fast access.

After a few months, when the jobs are no longer used for active production, the copies on disk are deleted. But StorNext lets the production team continue to see all the files stored in the tape library through the same file-system presentation. When editors want to re-use data, they simply call the files through their workstation and the jobs are opened in the disk work area. Users can even see files on media that has been removed for off-site storage.

"The StorNext archive has given us huge advantages," explains McCormac. "We used to store each job on its own \$250 piece of digital video media, and we didn't always have a backup. Now we store several jobs on a single \$50 LTO tape and always have a backup. With StorNext archiving, the files are safer, the process is automated, and we're reducing tape costs by 90% or more—for us that's thousands of dollars a month. It's also much easier to retrieve the data. Editors can see all the jobs through the file system and access them directly no matter where they happen to be stored. This is a much better, and a less expensive, approach than keeping old work on spinning disk or in the cloud."

Although StorNext's performance has been nearly problem-free, McCormac has still spent time talking to Quantum support engineers. A veteran at innovating his own solutions, he is always looking to get more out of technology. He says he's been impressed with the flexibility built into the product and the willingness of Quantum engineers to discuss the inner workings of StorNext. He can see a continued partnership with both Autodesk and Quantum.

"StorNext touches every piece of workflow at Optimus," McCormac says. "It doesn't have any trouble keeping up with us—and that's what we were looking for."

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ABOUT OPTIMUS

Optimus is a multi-faceted creative services company with locations in Chicago and Santa Monica. Owned and operated by five partners/employees, Optimus currently has a staff of about 100 full-time employees. The Chicago office combines a full-service video post-production house with an in-house stage and production arm, while Santa Monica is a creative boutique. As an integrated, collaborative team of directors, editors, designers, graphic artists, colorists, audio engineers, and online editors, Optimus can deliver any form of video content, from script to finished project.

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