DigitalFilm Tree Case Study

DigitalFilm Tree (DFT) is a post-production, creative, consulting, and software development company. Since 1998, DFT has played a definitive role in designing post and IT workflows for the media and entertainment industry. Clients include television, motion picture, independent, and the technology industry. DFT fosters an academic approach to post-production and IT design. Known for its numerous books, whitepapers and engineering reports, DFT's advice is sought after by clients of all scale and scope.

DIGITALFILM TREE'S CHALLENGE:
A WORKFLOW SOLUTION THAT WOULD WORK WELL ON THE FRONT AND BACK-END OF THE PRODUCTION PROCESS.

In the media and entertainment industry, post-production work is one of the most critical, yet complicated stages of production. Production crews are frequently in remote locations, which means getting footage back to editing can be a challenge. Projects may need to be accessed from different locations and in a form that allows all to work collaboratively.

DFT was looking for a cost-effective file-based workflow solution that would work well on the front and back-end of the production process. Having a form of data storage that would also act as an archive for completed projects was also important, as production studios often would need to access original copies in order to recover certain projects.

DIGITALFILM TREE'S SOLUTION:
LINEAR TAPE OPEN (LTO) WITH LINEAR TAPE FILE SYSTEM (LTFS)

Upon evaluating different options, DFT elected to use Linear Tape Open (LTO) technology as their storage medium. They started using LTO-3 tapes primarily for their own purposes in backing up the finished, color-corrected master projects, so that they would have an archive on-site. As LTO is a non-linear form of storage, it also worked well if the television show or movie needed to be reconstructed. The categorization would let editors know which files were which (AVID file, color file, etc.), making it easy to reassemble the film or television show.

The introduction of LTO-5 technology with Linear Tape File System (LTFS) opened a new range of options. With files even easier to locate and more interoperable, DFT quickly realized that project collaboration would now be even easier. Using OpenStack (the free and open-source software cloud computing platform), DFT was able to share their LTO with LTFS archived versions of projects directly in the cloud. Having this option allowed an additional location to store data while maintaining the archived version on-site.

DFT found major benefits by migrating certain assets from tape to cloud storage and from cloud storage to tape. Utilizing meta-data, DFT established workflows for clients to access their proxy files from cloud storage, as well as the associated high-resolution files living on tape. While shipping large amounts of data via tape is the most common, cheapest and (often times) the quickest way to transport data, saving content to the cloud provides an additional option to download directly from the source. Today DFT provides tape-to-cloud-to-tape services and software for their TV, Film and corporate clients.

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