

Strategic Partnership Addresses Studio Rendering Storage Requirements

FlexITy and Hitachi Data Systems Team Up on Proof of Concept Project for High Performance Studio Rendering Storage Solution for Corus Entertainment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corus Entertainment Inc.

- One of Canada's most successful integrated media and entertainment companies
- Toronto, Ontario

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

- Deploy a high performance storage solution capable of quickly transferring imaging and media
- Map security permissions between file systems
- Control costs and avoid disruption during transition to new storage solution

PARTNER SOLUTIONS

- Hitachi Data Systems storage and virtualization tools

BUSINESS RESULTS

- Faster storage rendering production times
- Increased productivity and efficiency
- Lower TCO

Business Challenge

When an organization has particular storage needs and is faced with maintaining numerous security permissions, a special solution is required. Corus Entertainment is one of Canada's top integrated media and entertainment companies, delivering interactive and informative content to millions each day via television and radio.

Corus brands are diverse and include children's television networks YTV, Treehouse, Nickelodeon Canada, TELETOON and TELETOON Retro. In addition, Corus services include women's brands consisting of W Network, Cosmopolitan TV, Oprah Winfrey Network Canada and W Movies. But that list is far from extensive. In addition to three local over-the-air television stations, Corus's other assets include ABC Spark, CMT Canada, Sundance Channel Canada and Telelatino. The company also delivers content via Western Canada's pay TV service Movie Central and has nine multiplex channels including HBO Canada.

The media listed just includes television, and Corus also owns 37 radio stations that are among the most listened to in the country. All of these entertainment assets combine to make Corus one of Canada's industry leaders and a powerful international player as well. As Corus explains, they take pride in their success because it means a stronger Canadian broadcasting industry, as well as a sturdier economy and reinforced communities across Canada. However, the breadth of Corus's reach means they have a large amount of data to store and manage, which requires an optimal storage solution capable of supporting the delivery of content to millions each day. These specific needs drove Corus to turn to Canada's leading IT services provider, FlexITy, to help align their business goals with technology.

Having worked with the company since 2009, Corus knew it could turn to FlexITy to help it deploy a high performance studio rendering and network attached storage platform. With the beneficial partnership with Hitachi Data Systems (HDS) on this initiative, the team was slated for success.

“FlexITy worked diligently to develop a comprehensive deployment plan that would enable accurate mapping of security permissions between its file systems as well as the ability to easily transfer imaging and media with appropriate security measures in place that would not inhibit high performance,” said FlexITy CEO Peter Stavropoulos.

“In today’s highly digital, competitive world, both speed and security are paramount. Fast speeds cannot be pursued at the expense of security and vice versa, and this was kept in mind during our partnership.”

Partner Solutions

Since both security and fast delivery speeds were integral for Corus Entertainment’s solution, FlexITy strategically partnered with HDS to ensure that the solution deployed was capable of meeting the company’s needs today as well as scaling accordingly for future growth. HDS has been dedicated to helping enterprises around the globe maximize their IT investments by improving performance, so Hitachi had a good sense of what type of system could help Corus Entertainment boost performance while also reducing total cost of ownership. The initiative consisted of three main steps: develop and architect Proof of Concept acceptance criteria, provide Corus’s Studio Rendering required NAS storage functionalities and assist Corus in the POC process and file system mapping.

“We knew that our especially specific industry needs required that we take a unique, well-planned approach to data transfer and storage,” said Mike Reid, Director of IT at Corus Entertainment.

“Our company’s physical distribution demanded a solution that would enable our cross-border teams to effectively perform large data transfers between offices and boost productivity. Security and accuracy were identified as our top priorities with the new technologies infrastructure. FlexITy architected and implemented a solution that met our criteria, and FlexITy’s expert staff provided quality support for the installation process and assisted with training to empower our teams to make the most of the new solution.”

When first developing the POC acceptance criteria, FlexITy and HDS decided to include three checklists for the project, including accessibility, functionality and performance. In order to deliver all the desired NAS storage functionalities, FlexITy outlined the need to provide HUS/ NAS storage infrastructure, facilitate the meeting of studio rendering storage requirements and enable an ideal POC environment. To assist Corus Entertainment with the POC process,

FlexITy took the reins, providing project management resources and overseeing all POC-related tasks. FlexITy and HDS were both made available to help Corus address concerns and issues that were related to the POC process, and the three organizations worked together to collectively review the results and act appropriately.

Business Results

To provide Corus Entertainment with a powerful solution that would allow them to transfer images and media quickly with the necessary security permissions to move content between different file systems, FlexITy and HDS determined that the best solution was the HDS HUS 150 w HNAS model 3080.

The Hitachi Unified Storage (HUS) 150 provided Corus with many advanced features, including auto tiering and data migration, thin provisioning and file systems consolidation. With high density disk trays and wide striping of data across multiple RAID groups, the HUS 150 is capable of copying data remotely so that data availability reached 99.999 percent with no single point of failure. The system allowed enhanced scalability, with LUNs scaled to 128TB and file systems to 256TB, able to create up to 1,024 writeable snapshots per LUN and per file system. Backend system bandwidth totaled 19,200MB/sec with up to 32 data paths. For Corus, the HUS system provided a single platform for block, file and object, meaning they now had the ability to flexibly provision storage capacity by blocking LUNs and file volumes as needed. This solution provided high availability and business continuity, enhanced scalability and performance, and the advanced functionality required for successful storage management. Other benefits that the HUS 150 provided included the ability to grow capacity of existing pools without reducing performance, optimization of price performance and linear performance scalability.

“FlexITy and HDS were able to help Corus maximize access time to data, improve storage utilization rates, simplify storage management, meet service level objectives and reduce costs associated with facility maintenance.”

With the HDS NAS 3090, Corus was able to simplify its IT infrastructure by consolidating NAS devices and file servers. This component is specifically designed to help organizations manage performance-driven applications, boosting productivity and competitiveness by reducing processing cycle times. This component also allows more simultaneous users and projects, adding an extra layer of increased productivity.

“Hitachi Data Systems was happy to partner with FlexITy to help provide an optimal solution capable of meeting all of Corus Entertainment’s unique needs,” said Marcel Escorcio, Regional Vice President and GM, HDS Canada. “We understand that there are very specific storage and security requirements for studio rendering, and when paired with Corus’s need to consistently deliver media to a broad audience, a strategic partnership and POC demonstration were identified as the best solution for the company.”

FlexITy filled the project management role for the POC process, assisting Corus in creating and expanding the Filesystem, EVS, virtual volumes and CIFS services. FlexITy also assisted in exporting Filesystem via NFS and guided Corus users in accessing the Filesystem from both Linux and Windows clients, sharing it between the different operating systems, creating snapshots and file restoration and performing baseline analysis.