

ALPHADOGS: A CASE STUDY STAYING AHEAD OF THE PACK

Located in the hub of the entertainment industry, AlphaDogs is one of the most cutting edge post-production firms in Los Angeles.



The award-winning AlphaDogs team combines a wealth of talent, decades of experience and an unrivaled dedication to providing top-notch customer service. The post-production finishing house has been providing signature services to an impressive client roster, including The Learning Channel, The Discovery Channel and Spike TV, since 2002.

The Hunt for Effective Storage Begins

Before AlphaDogs opened their doors five years ago, an infrastructure wired with Gigabit Ethernet and Fibre Channel was installed to maximize technical capabilities and scalability options. However, until they found a shared storage system that was compatible with their operation, they relied on a storage system that was patched through local storage using media drives, fibre drives and a fibre patch base.

Terence Curren, president of AlphaDogs, realized that local storage was a data bottleneck that consistently impeded the rapid transitions required to maintain a productive workflow. “Sharing data required our entire network to shut down and manually patch data into another room,” explained Curren. “As a result, our capabilities to work in SD and HD were severely compromised due to file size and the lack of drive space.”

At the same time, they began work on The Learning Channel’s new reality television show, *Bringing Home Baby*. Trying to digitize shows and effectively produce the 20 segments became a challenge. The ineffective sneaker net exasperated the team and caused long delays. Despite success from the client perspective, the editing team reached a breaking point and knew they needed a better solution.



In order to streamline workflow and digitize the data, a total overhaul of AlphaDog’s existing storage infrastructure would be necessary. The search for a cross-platform, shared storage solution began.

Survival of the Fittest: Making the Move to TerraBlock

The AlphaDogs team had several key requirements when they began researching storage options. The ideal solution had to work seamlessly across platforms, attach compatibly to the Avid and Apple workstations, and have low administrative upkeep. Most importantly, AlphaDogs wanted an affordable system.

Terence Curren was introduced to TerraBlock through industry contacts and was immediately driven to its straight-forward design and capabilities. “TerraBlock met all of our prerequisites, and it beat out the Apple Xsan and Avid Unity tools we investigated,” explained Curren. “TerraBlock was a virtual plug and play tool. Other solutions required

so much administrative attention that they would drain productivity or require someone to build and maintain them. In the end, the platform capabilities and price point of the TerraBlock were the key differentiators and made it a sound investment.”

Once AlphaDogs was up and running on the TerraBlock, they were able to redesign the production pipeline to support SD and HD work on a dedicated drive. This essentially helped redefine AlphaDogs’ capabilities and turn-around time. The Final Cut Pro HD, PowerMac G5 workstation and a pair of Avid Symphony Universal suites are fully integrated into the TerraBlock shared network storage. With the TerraBlock as the backbone, there is enough throughput for the Final Cut Pro HD to handle 10-bit 4:4:4 uncompressed HD.

Today, AlphaDogs continues to deliver outstanding creativity and post-production services to a wide-range of clients, including Spike TV, the Sci-Fi Channel and the Discovery Channel. The TerraBlock has facilitated workflow, enabled the staff to fully collaborate and eliminated downtime. Ultimately, the TerraBlock has provided the synergy AlphaDogs needed between their workstations and staff to keep the crew running ahead of the pack.

