

StorNext Series

StorNext Increases Post-Production Performance by up to 10x and Solves Growing Video Pains for Leading Direct Marketer

Brand Developers Ltd, a leading international direct marketing company, found that its storage couldn't keep up as business rapidly grew. It switched from single-tier NAS to a scale-out storage and archive solution based on Quantum's StorNext appliances and can now effectively manage fast-growing video content stores with iron-clad protection, enabling increased productivity.

STORING, SAVING, AND REUSING CONTENT BECAME A NIGHTMARE

Brand Developers offers one-stop shopping for its clients, handling product development, marketing, call centers, and distribution of consumer products, all of which are sold through direct television campaigns. The company's success has been meteoric. It has already expanded beyond its founding site in New Zealand to Australia and Southeast Asia and now has its sights set on entering the North American market. Success in the market has meant fast growth in content as well, and that created major problems for the 12-person, in-house post-production group.

Brand Developers' business relies on developing video content for its direct marketing campaigns, but as the company grew, major strains were appearing in its storage system. What worked for a business with 200 employees and 90TB of production data just couldn't handle the load anymore when, just two years later, the company grew to nearly 700 employees and the total storage reached 340TB.

"The problem was that our storage strategy couldn't sustain our business model anymore," explains Callum MacEwan, Video Engineer and Senior Editor. "We started with a single tier of NAS storage for everything, but our content never dies. We constantly need to reuse and update existing material for new markets, so we have to have it readily available—it was all on the disk arrays."

Because the volume of content was large and fast-growing, storage costs were rising rapidly and traditional protection strategies didn't work. Brand

Developers kept adding disk storage, strategically backing up the most critical data and keeping multiple copies of files on the filers. But that didn't help when one of the three primary servers went down, leaving vital data unavailable for more than two weeks.

"We knew that protection was important, but we suddenly realized that we were protecting the outcome of a \$500,000 production shoot by sticking it on a \$250 disk—it didn't make sense," says MacEwan.

That was when the company made a decision to look for another kind of storage solution, one that could meet all of its needs: manage the growth, improve protection, and still give the production team fast access to all the legacy content.

MORE NAS OR STORAGE TIERS?

Brand Developers started out by doing its research, talking to all the main storage suppliers for media companies and to other leading media production companies to understand what they did. The first option proposed was adding more NAS capacity.

"There was a lot of hand-waving and 'blinding us with science' from one vendor, but we didn't want to go down that road," MacEwan says. "The initial costs were way too high, and we would still be back in the position of needing to protect and use older data."

So the team decided to look for a system that could include a layer of tape storage as an archive. The company engaged a systems integrator, Factorial, with experience in helping other customers solve similar problems.



"We don't worry about our storage anymore. It's rock-solid, and I recommend Quantum and the StorNext solution to anyone who will listen."

Callum MacEwan

Video Engineer and Senior Editor,
Brand Developers

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- StorNext® M441 Metadata Appliance
- StorNext QX-1200 Disk Array
- StorNext AEL500 Archive Enabled Library

KEY BENEFITS

- Manages fast-growing data with less disk
- Lowers overall storage costs compared to NAS approaches
- Protects all files on removable media automatically
- Enables fast archive and transparent access to all data
- Provides mixed open system support – both Windows and Mac clients
- Delivers 7 to 10 times faster post-production performance

"For us, archiving is different than for most companies, even other media companies," MacEwan continues. "Every week, we are going back to existing material—either reusing it as-is or refreshing it for a new campaign. An archive approach that just parked data off-site wouldn't work for us—we needed an active archive capability."

STORNEXT PROVIDES END-TO-END SHARED STORAGE AND ARCHIVE SOLUTION

Brand Developers worked with Factorial to build an end-to-end Quantum StorNext appliance solution consisting of file sharing and tiered archiving, which leveraged both disk and tape archive technologies. Installing the system proved to be straightforward and fast.

"It only took five work days," reports Tim Benson, Director and Technology Evangelist at Factorial. "And it went so smoothly that people started throwing data at it after the first three days—that data is still in the system and being used."

The Quantum solution included the StorNext QX-1200 high-performance disk for the primary work area, StorNext M441 metadata appliance for simultaneous file access, and StorNext AEL500 tape library which also provides automatic content tiering that spans disk and tape. In the new system, only 40TB of capacity is needed for the high-speed post-production work, and all the projects are centralized. Older content is automatically moved off the performance disk to a managed storage environment where it is protected and preserved on the StorNext AEL tape library.

"Now everything is copied to tape as an integrated background process, and for the most critical material, we make two copies and vault one off-site," explains MacEwan. "The beauty of the StorNext system is that data on tape is part of the standard file catalog, and our editors can get it back again to reuse it without any problem at all. We use much less disk; the content is protected; we can access it on tape transparently to our users; and the cost is much, much lower than the NAS-only option."

BENEFITTING FROM OPEN APPROACH AND HIGH PERFORMANCE

The Quantum solution set included two more attributes that were important to the Brand Developers team: an open systems approach supporting mixed environments and high performance.

"We use both Windows and Mac editing stations, and we are transitioning from using Avid tools to Autodesk," says MacEwan. "The fact that StorNext can transparently support both those platforms was key to us—it preserves our options and makes the change easy."

"The other big advantage was increased speed. Editors were always complaining about performance with the old system. StorNext is giving us 7 to 10 times faster throughput on a single editing station, and our overall, system-wide performance has doubled."

In fact, the StorNext system works so well that the Brand Developers IT team has found other uses—it is already being used to archive a 9.5-million-file call log record set that is now no longer taking up disk space or needing backup.

"Quantum was great to work with throughout the whole process," MacEwan says. "They listened to what we wanted, helped steer us toward the right solution, and helped with the roll-out. We don't worry about our storage anymore. It's rock-solid, and I recommend Quantum and the StorNext solution to anyone who will listen."

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ABOUT BRAND DEVELOPERS LTD

Brand Developers Limited is Australasia's leading Direct Response Television Company, specializing in product development, infomercial shopping, and multi-channel retail distribution. Operating from offices in Auckland, New Zealand and Melbourne, Australia, the company continues to push the boundaries of traditional home-based TV shopping.

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