Case Study: Media & Entertainment

PROMISE TECHNOLOGY, INC.

TRANSIT

Solution Summary

Challenges

- In need of a collaborative, file based storage solution serving up to 25 editors
- Cost effective storage solution offering high performance and low latency
- Known, reliable shared storage solution based on Mac OS X

Solution

- Xsan filesystem using Mac mini with PROMISE SANLink adapters for MDC
- Storage backend powered by VTrak x30 series 8Gbps Fibre Channel storage

Results

- Performance requirements met for 25 editors
- Enabled cost effective solution lower than competing solutions
- Delivered reliable solution on proven technology in a Mac OS X environment

SANLink

TRANSIT, a creative services agency, leverages PROMISE SANLink™ with Mac mini for an inexpensive Xsan metadata controller

TRANSIT is an upstart and fast-growing creative services agency specializing in editorial for theatrical film advertising. Located in Santa Monica, California, TRANSIT has delivered high profile theatrical trailers and TV spots for full feature films such as *Thor*, *Madagascar 3*, *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*, and *The Help*.

When tasked with designing their next generation storage infrastructure, TRANSIT was in search of a storage solution that required support for up to 25 editors and would scale easily as new editing systems were added. Among their chief concerns were creating a collaborative environment where editors could easily share their projects in a file-based workflow, a reliable solution based on Mac OS X systems, and meeting their performance requirements all while keeping a limited budget in mind. An additional consideration was the ability to have a truly portable, work anywhere environment where any of the producers could access their assets regardless of location within the TRANSIT facility. The ease-of-use, portability and small form factor of the PROMISE SANLink fully supported this requirement.

> "SANLink just works. It doesn't take anything extraordinary. There's nothing to install, simply plug it in and instantly you're connected to the SAN in a flash."
>
> - Shawn Yashar, Co-President & Co-Founder, TRANSIT

TRANSIT, working with reseller New Media Hollywood, decided to move forward with a tried and true filesystem with Apple Xsan as their file-based workflow solution. However, with Xserve no longer available as a solution to use as an Xsan metadata controller (MDC), TRANSIT was forced to find another viable solution. Enter Thunderbolt™ technology and the PROMISE SANLink Thunderbolt to Fibre Channel (FC) adapter. By utilizing Intel's new high-speed I/O

port technology which enabled 10Gbps speeds, PROMISE developed a Thunderbolt to Fibre Channel adapter allowing any Thunderbolt enabled system to connect to a FC SAN at native FC speeds. Thunderbolt enabled systems include Mac mini, iMac, MacBook Pro, and MacBook Air.

For their MDC, TRANSIT used two Mac minis with PROMISE SANLink Thunderbolt to Fibre Channel adapters with Xsan on Mac OS X Lion. The setup paved the way for a reliable, yet inexpensive solution for Xsan MDCs. "When it became possible to use Mac minis and Lion with SANLink as MDCs, we eradicated two of the major costs which were the licenses and the additional costs of multiple Mac Pros or Xserves," said Shawn Yashar, Co-President & Co-Founder of TRANSIT, "but we didn't have to sacrifice reliability or the performance we needed for our Xsan setup." Mac OS X Lion currently includes Xsan at no additional cost. Art St. Germain, Director of Operations, TRANSIT also added that "We are also very excited that by using Mac minis instead of Mac Pros for our MDCs we are saving power and outputting a lot less heat. In addition, the amount of space we saved using Mac minis with SANLinks versus using 12U for Mac Pros was a huge win."

Figure 1. Xsan metadata controller setup with SANLink Thunderbolt to Fibre Channel adapters connected to VTrak x30 Series RAID Storage.

SANLink is a full duplex dual-port 4Gbps Fibre Channel adapter that requires zero setup and can be managed using the built in Mac OS X Fibre Channel utility. "SANLink just works. It doesn't take anything extraordinary. There's nothing to install, simply plug it in and instantly you're connected to the SAN in a flash," said Yashar. SANLink is able to deliver up to 800MB/s to a single host and auto-negotiates at 1, 2 and 4Gbps speeds.

"Installing our first Thunderbolt to Fiber Channel SAN solution in a live production environment was a breeze by having PROMISE's excellent technology and support at our back. It made for a much easier installation than we had anticipated," said Andrew Kasson, General Manager of New Media Hollywood. "It actually took less time to integrate than many of our previous Xsan projects and continues to be very stable."

TRANSIT's infrastructure also consists of a 48TB VTrak x30 series RAID subsystem connected via a Fibre Channel switch and services up to 25 editors at any given time. While currently using Mac Pro systems for edit stations, TRANSIT sees great value in cost and space savings by being able to use iMacs and MacBook Pros with SANLink for edit and preview stations.

"I feel like it's been a great value. The ability to have an entire Xsan infrastructure, between the Mac mini MDCs, SANLink adapters and a VTrak x30 RAID system for under $40,000 was unheard of until now," said Yashar. "In addition, the management of the entire storage infrastructure hasn't been complex and has been fairly easy; the PROMISE hardware is a big part of that."

For additional information regarding TRANSIT, visit www.beintransit.com.
For additional information regarding New Media Hollywood, visit www.nmh.com.

For more information, please visit PROMISE on the web at www.promise.com.