



EditShare Jumps Into the Game with Ubisoft Montreal

Game Time

Boasting video game franchises such as Assassin's Creed, Just Dance, Far Cry and Tom Clancy's series under their banner, it is without a doubt that Ubisoft is a top player amongst gamers. With more than 3500 employees conjuring up some of the market's most sought-after series, Ubisoft requires an advanced infrastructure that can support the demands of creating and marketing these blockbuster games en masse.

To build momentum for upcoming releases, the creative team is tasked with packaging short commercial teaser spots that are shared across multiple video and social platforms. "We have a different set up from the typical capture or montage studio. First, our montage studio is larger than the average. With over 3,500 people on staff, we have a lot of different connections and workflow demands," says Michel Forbes, System Administrator, Ubisoft Montreal. "One of the key workflows is live capture, edit and real-time video playback. This is the defacto workflow for many teams; the complexity of managing such a large operation and heavy project load requires a high degree of organization and system performance. We researched the options and found EditShare to be versatile enough to meet the requirements with the performance

necessary to support the nuances and needs of these demanding productions."

Ubisoft Montreal first invested in EditShare in 2013, and eventually upgraded the system to the new XStream EFS architecture featuring almost 1 petabyte in storage.

The Controller

The rapid-fire teaser and promo production requires a set up that allows the artists to record games in development and playback the footage in real-time, cutting the spots on the fly. All this is accessed from their desktop, whilst utilising the EditShare advanced file system that can scale to track a fast growing media project catalog. However complicated this may seem, it's the resolution that proved to be a concern. Forbes adds, "The biggest challenge we had is capturing and playing back in 4K. As of today, most of the games are shipped in 4K resolution and all of our marketing materials need to showcase this. We need to make sure the quality of the marketing is as good as the game itself. With so many artists working simultaneously, 4K can choke the network if the infrastructure cannot support the ingest and playback and scale with varying demand. This is where EditShare really came through for us."

To meet the demands of live capture, editing and real-time playback of up to 4K content, Ubisoft Montreal installed two enterprise EFS 450 solutions with integrated connection to the EditShare Geevs video servers which support up to 4 concurrent ingest and playout streams. The XStream EFS 450 is a powerful distributed scale-out video storage platform developed for the most intensive media workflows. It's designed from the ground up to support resilient large-scale workgroups requiring high-bandwidth, high-volume media ingest, transcoding, online collaborative editing and multiplatform distribution of HD, 4K, 8K and beyond. Combined with the Geevs servers, which provide unmatched codec support including DVCPRO HD, Apple ProRes, Avid DNxHD, XDCAM HD and AVC-Intra, the high-performance infrastructure allows Ubisoft Montreal to deploy the bandwidth intensive workflow as well as connect all creative systems to the EditShare system for media and project sharing across both campuses. The diverse set up feeds the media and marketing projects to a wide range of artists using Adobe Premiere Pro and After Effects editors and artists. It also connects the facilities 22 sound design and Pro Tools editing systems.

Game Strategy

The staff uses Geevs, which connects to 4 gaming PCs, to capture (in 1080p) games under development onto the EditShare XStream EFS systems. Editors who are also expert gamers, live cut their shots as they record from Geevs onto the EditShare. They then playback their shots in real-time to quality check the image and capture. "We have artists and editors that are creating these marketing stories continuously. They will take the latest and greatest from the games and they will do a little story with it and push the package to marketing for promotion over YouTube, Twitter and other platforms." Forbes elaborates, "The first requirement is to capture the best shot and do so in the highest resolution possible. After that, it's picked up by one of the editors for editing on Adobe Premiere. I must point out what is peculiar about this live capture is that there is nothing really scripted in the games. The artist has to play and practice until they get the right shot. So when they do get their shot right, they record

it. It's key that the recording is perfect. This type of workflow is like capturing a sporting event for me. It's hard to replicate that perfect play." The EditShare set up delivers the highest bandwidth and resolution support, ensuring artists' work are captured according to plan.

A Place to Park Assets

Beyond the creative group, Ubisoft Montreal has found another use for the EditShare platforms- for parking media content. Forbes adds, "Outside the creative team, there are other teams within Ubisoft Montreal that are using videos and need a place to store and access the media." One large source of media comes from the many conference rooms recordings. "Our IT Department has been able to leverage the available space and place additional secure video content onto the EditShare system for varying periods of time and with easy accessibility for the rights holders. This unknown use has been a great value-add for the company overall."

Next Move ACL

EditShare recently released an ACL Media Space feature that satisfies organizations like Ubisoft Montreal who prefer Access Control lists instead of "read-only" or "read/write" rules that govern current EditShare media spaces. "For an organization our size, we prefer to manage the EditShare like a windows system and the new ACL capability will give us the fine-grained control of user permissions we are looking for," says Forbes. ACL Spaces are managed in Finder and Windows Explorer extensions that are installed with EditShare Connect. Only users with the ACL Management Limited Administrative permission will be able to modify ACL Space Permissions. Those without such permissions can view ACLs in any place where they are allowed to browse in Finder and/or Explorer. Forbes concludes, "For me, it's all about the return on the investment and getting the most out of your storage solution. With features like ACL, we continue to get more from our EditShare platform."