Jam Filled Entertainment Accelerates Innovation, Collaboration and Creativity with Qumulo

Accelerates petabyte-scale file production pipeline by consolidating multiple locations and workflows onto the Qumulo File Data Platform

Jam Filled Entertainment, a division of Boat Rocker Media, is an award-winning Canadian animation studio based in Ottawa, Ontario. The company's mission is to produce world-class media. It fulfills that mission by working with clients like Nickelodeon and Netflix to create famous shows including Bubble Guppies, Casagrandes, Dino Ranch and Final Space.

Successful projects led to fast growth, and Jam Filled built new studios to manage a growing slate of productions. But massive file data growth and technical issues with legacy infrastructure threatened production deadlines. Jam Filled turned to the Qumulo® File Data Platform to manage and centralize its massive file data for all of its studios.

> "Now that we moved to Qumulo, our artists and production teams are hitting their deadlines with less stress and fewer hours and have the time to produce higher quality work than ever before. They're happier and better able to focus since they no longer have to spend time waiting for the old system to get fixed."
> – Aaron Pearce, Director of Systems Engineering at Jam Filled Entertainment

The animation firm stores about 4PB of data across its three studios. The bulk of the data is 2D and 3D image files that range in size and travel an intensive production pipeline with multiple stages and applications. Legacy file systems faltered, were not keeping pace with the company's fast data growth, and threatening production deadlines.

In Ottawa, the storage system was a legacy NAS. The system had never worked well, and failing nodes were a daily or weekly occurrence.

The Toronto system was a premium array from the same vendor. This system was more reliable than the troubled array in Ottawa but was challenging to manage, and customer support was disappointing. The company was also building a new studio in Halifax and did not want to experience the same set of problems in the new facility.

Jam Filled Boosts Productivity and Satisfaction

After it's current system reached end of life, IT needed a reliable, highly performant, and scalable platform that would support its critical production goals in Ottawa and Halifax. Jam Filled partnered with IC Technology to select, plan, and deploy the new Qumulo File Data Platform. Pearce said, "We can expand the Qumulo platform as we go by simply adding nodes and spinning up additional clusters."

Benefits

- **Major boost in uptime and productivity.** Under the legacy system, system slowdowns and failures were a serious threat to productivity, resulting in downtime that averaged half a day each week or 208 labor hours a year. With Qumulo, Jam Filled boosted system uptime, accelerated performance, and enabled artists to work without disruption to meet critical deadlines. Jam Filled also eliminated the overtime costs driven by the legacy system downtime.

- **Freed up IT for innovative new projects.** IT was receiving 15+ uptime and performance-related support tickets a week, or more than 780 tickets a year, with its prior system. Qumulo cut that number to zero with its robust architecture and proactive system analytics. The productivity gains give the IT team more time for high-priority business projects and technology innovation.

- **Saved precious data center space.** The legacy system took up 12U of rack space. Jam Filled gained back 50% of that space and saved on energy costs by replacing the old system with the Qumulo 6U footprint while gaining much higher capacity.

Implementation was simple and straightforward, and the IT team uses the Qumulo File Data Platform's simple user interface for efficient management and real-time operational analytics. Jam Filled's technical engineers now automate provisioning and application integration easily using the Qumulo advanced API.

The IT team cited its four favorite technical and business outcomes: increased productivity, real-time analytics and visibility, high performance, and excellent customer support.

Increased Productivity

Jam Filled anticipates tight deadlines as part of its work with premiere studios and multiple projects. But when its legacy systems began to frequently slow down and crash, its artists were forced to wait until the network was back online.

Everything changed for the better with Qumulo. Network performance and reliability dramatically improved, and staff downtime disappeared. Artists now make their deadlines with less stress and higher quality.

Real-Time Analytics Optimize Platform

The IT team optimizes the Qumulo platform with real-time native analytics. The intuitive interface quickly produces actionable reports for troubleshooting and optimization. Users can easily drill down from simplified reports to detailed information.

Pearce cited an example of using analytics to support a new show. "The creative teams start rendering frames, and analytics suddenly display a massive influx of data. Is it the render? Maybe or maybe not. With Qumulo, we don't have to guess because we can see where the data is coming from and fix the problem."

Visibility is also essential for efficient searchability. Clients often requested existing media for redistribution and leveraging creative assets. The project managers were concerned that if their data was not archived on the production servers, it would be hard to locate and restore.

This is no longer a concern. The Qumulo File Data Platform keeps project files safe, searchable, and immediately accessible. Production servers run faster than ever before, and IT can easily spin up new projects without risking existing files.

High Performance Raises Satisfaction

With its legacy system, the IT team fielded 15+ support tickets every week: over 780 a year due to performance and uptime issues. Performance gains with Qumulo eliminated slowdown and shutdown support tickets: from more than 15 a week to zero.

"Since we've implemented the Qumulo platform, we've never had a single person complain about file system performance -- and it's a relatively small cluster. If we need higher performance in the future, all we have to do is add more nodes."

– Aaron Pearce

The gain was not limited to performance. IT also reduced data center rack space by 50%, shrinking from 12U to 6U, and even gained greater capacity within the smaller footprint.

Proactive Customer Support

When Jam Filled has a question, they reach out to Qumulo over Slack and immediately get the right response. "The engineering support that we get through Qumulo's Slack channel has been phenomenal," said Pearce. "Sometimes they know something's off before we do," recalled Pearce, when he got a Slack from Qumulo on his way into work. Not only is Qumulo's support excellent, but Qumulo's feature development cycle is rapid. Instead of waiting for Qumulo to catch up with Jam Filled's needs and suggestions, the company looks forward to catching up with ongoing Qumulo development. For example, the IT team is preparing to test some of Qumulo's newer feature offerings on Amazon S3.

"Qumulo gave us back all those hours we spent managing the old system. With the time we gained, we can concentrate on high-priority technology innovation. That's worth its weight in gold."

– Aaron Pearce

Preparing for the Cloud

The Qumulo File Data Platform brought analytics, reliability, scalability, and speed to Jam Filled's mission-critical production workflows. It also positions the company for onboarding to the cloud. When Jam Filled is ready, Qumulo will enable it to expand it's high-performance file data workloads on the cloud.

"Qumulo is straightforward and intuitive. We aren't burning extra time with an overly complex system and third-party add-ons. For us, value always factors down to the amount of time we don't have to spend on the system. Qumulo is great."

– Aaron Pearce