Industrial Brothers Keeps Animation Rolling with Qumulo in the Cloud

Industrial Brothers-- a full-service animation studio that creates and produces its own children's content-- thrives on a collaborative model with its artists working together in close physical proximity. When the studio needed to implement remote working for its team members due to the pandemic, Qumulo stepped in to recreate the studio experience and deep collaboration with production in the cloud. Within days, Qumulo's file data platform replicated Industrial Brothers' creative workflows on the AWS cloud, enabling the artists to keep production timelines on track.

Based in Toronto, fast-growing Industrial Brothers adopted Qumulo's file data platform on-prem in 2019 to improve performance and scalability when creating new digital content.

But when COVID-19 hit Canada in early 2020, the Ontario province ordered non-essential businesses to close their offices. Industrial Brothers turned to Qumulo to quickly shift its workloads to the cloud and get its artists working in the cloud.

Industrial Brothers and Imaginations on Fire

From Kingdom Force to Dino Ranch, Industrial Brothers produces top-quality children's entertainment that's viewed all over the world. Industrial Brothers believes that quality children's entertainment gives kids a sense of personal empowerment and, through their imaginations, become part of a much bigger world.

Challenge #1: Boost Productivity with Ready Access to File Data

Jean-Paul Godmaire is head of IT at Industrial Brothers. When he arrived in 2019, the studios' fast growth was straining the data center. It needed to address its ability to scale the ways it was producing and managing digital content.

The studio's legacy storage could not scale to meet growing data volumes, and its frequent slowdowns and stoppages impacted productivity. The company was losing 162 labor hours a month for a total of nearly 2,000 lost annual labor hours.

Production deadlines were set in stone, so the teams worked overtime to make up for the missing hours. One missed deadline could have cascaded to affect many others, which would severely impact the business.

For these reasons, Godmaire wanted to replace the failing storage system with a more efficient and scalable file data solution that they could depend on anytime, anywhere. He made his business case by saying, "We have more than one hundred people on staff, all of whom depend on ready access to our files and applications. For every hour that they have to wait, the company loses more than one hundred hours of labor productivity."

Solution: Zero Downtime with Qumulo Cloud File Data Platform

Godmaire looked at several file systems, but already knew and trusted Qumulo. He recognized it was not a cut-rate starter system but was extremely cost-efficient because of its reliability, performance, scalability, and ease of management – all features that the starter systems could not match.

Business Outcomes

- **Business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic:** When Industrial Brothers' central office closed due to COVID-19, Qumulo helped the studio to move all creative and production workloads to the cloud to keep operations running and to ensure that production deadlines would be met.

- **Significant improvement in efficiency and productivity:** The Qumulo File Data Platform supports uninterrupted artist workflows. Prior to Qumulo, Industrial Brothers' legacy storage solution cost the company more than 1,940 labor hours annually in lost productivity. With Qumulo, the company regained almost 2,000 annual labor hours or approximately $80,000 a year.

- **Confidence boost for artists:** Industrial Brothers went from an average file system downtime of 45 minutes every ten days, to zero downtime with Qumulo. Artists were able to focus on their valuable work, not on the storage system.

- **Real-time analytics to optimize workflows:** Qumulo's analytics offer valuable insights on peak data usage and other vital characteristics, which will help them to more effectively manage their data and plan for future growth as the studio scales production.

"We selected Qumulo because its file system gave us both the scalability and high-performance that our studio requires," Godmaire said. "I also appreciate Qumulo's frequent software updates, which ensure that we have the most up-to-date features and functionality."

Deployment was extremely simple. Industrial Brothers' reseller delivered and set Qumulo's file data platform up within an hour. The data administrators at Industrial Brothers used simple scripts to migrate the data and accomplished the migration over a single weekend.

Industrial Brothers went from downtime of almost 2,000 annual labor hours, to zero downtime with Qumulo File Data Platform -- saving approximately $80,000 a year.

Ease of management and support were essential considerations when selecting the platform. Qumulo's support engineers monitor the system remotely and contact his team immediately with solutions should any problems occur. Scaling the Qumulo platform is easy as well. Industrial Brothers' admins can simply add more nodes for performance and capacity without disrupting the cluster.

Solution: Real-Time Analytics to Optimize Workflows

Qumulo's real-time analytics also enable Godmaire to optimize file data workflows. Industrial Brothers does not render in the cloud, so Godmaire's team is able to view the company's on-site render farm for bottlenecks and sub-optimal performance.

Godmaire uses Qumulo's analytics for valuable insights, which will be especially vital as the company looks to scale its business.

"I can see information such as how many connections are open at any time, which nodes on the farm are using the most IOPS, or the characteristics of peak data usage," said Godmaire. "The Qumulo analytics provide very helpful information that is much harder to ascertain on other systems."

Challenge #2: Multiple Deadlines-- Stop the Pandemic Blues

When Ontario declared a state of emergency in March 2020, Industrial Brothers had to close its physical office in Toronto. Its highly collaborative culture did not support remote work, and there had been no previous need to implement a cloud presence.

The only way they could accomplish the move on time was with Qumulo in the cloud. There was no Plan B.

Solution: From Office to Cloud in Under a Month

The Qumulo and Industrial Brothers teams went to work. They built the company's pipeline in AWS, leveraging Qumulo as the file data platform and Teradici to give a real-time experience from the remote creative workstations.

"Qumulo's customer success team is remarkable," said Godmaire. "Even with simple requests, they go above-and-beyond what is required, helping us address not just our storage-related questions, but ways that we can improve our workflows and continue growing our business efficiently."

Godmaire said, "I don't want to say Qumulo saved the company. But we were relying on this solution, and if it didn't work, I don't know what we would have done. We consulted, deployed, tested, and onboarded the Qumulo cloud file system within three weeks, and then we were up and running. We essentially moved the office to the cloud in under a month. Kudos to Qumulo for making it simple."

Even when COVID-19 restrictions ease, Industrial Brothers' physical office is a tight space. Social distancing will be impossible to observe if the entire staff returns. Godmaire said, "Before the pandemic, we were considering cloud services at some point. But the pandemic forced our hand. For the foreseeable future, we're in the cloud."

Working without Limits

The Qumulo File Data Platform runs the same enterprise file system in the cloud as on-prem. Data can be natively and seamlessly replicated between instances or across regions. Today, at Industrial Brothers, powerful connections between the data center and the cloud support remote users and data-intensive workloads. In the future, Qumulo's easy scalability will enable the studio to support more artists and exciting new projects, including cinematic-quality Netflix productions.

"Qumulo has been a huge game-changer. Now we don't have to worry about whether our creative teams will have what they need to make tight production deadlines. That is how much Qumulo's cloud file data platform has improved our business and our lives."

— Jean-Paul Godmaire
Head of IT, Industrial Brothers