



PlasterCITY Digital Post

SANbox 9200 Turbo-Charges High-Definition Desktop Editing at PlasterCITY Digital Post

Challenge

Expand throughput and cut costs of a storage area network (SAN) used for desktop editing of uncompressed, high-definition 4:4:4 format film

Solution

One QLogic® SANbox® 9200 Fibre Channel switch manages a 32-terabyte SAN, which includes one Ciprico® MediaVault™ 4210 Fibre Channel RAID array and ATTO Fibre Channel host adapters; Apple® Final Cut Pro® editing software, and AJA™ KONA™ 2 video capture cards

Result

128-port 4Gbps SAN switch increases speed of 4:4:4 high-definition post-production desktop processes by over 30 percent—improving editor productivity and shortening project turnaround times



For companies in the entertainment business, technology often creates competitive advantages. When Hollywood-based PlasterCITY Digital Post (PCDP) tackled the problems of accommodating higher-resolution imagery while also speeding up editing turnaround times, it became the first company to perform 4:4:4 high-definition postproduction entirely on cost-effective Macintosh® desktop computers.

This unprecedented achievement of producing high-definition video in a desktop environment was accomplished by using a high-performance SAN. Says Stephen Beres, chief technical officer at PCDP, “We used four stacked 4Gbps QLogic SANbox 5602 switches to transfer the enormous files to our desktop workstations. A single second of high-definition video could be 1.5 gigabytes in size.”

To speed up editing workflow in this environment, Beres decided to double the bandwidth between the storage devices and the Macintosh workstations. According to Beres, “If we could double the speed of these connections, we could increase our profitability by performing more postproduction tasks with our existing staff.”

The PCDP SAN gets ready for more speed

The editing workstations were connected to the SAN by two 4Gbps links. Doubling the connections would deliver the equivalent of 16Gbps of video to each computer. But this required more ports than the 5602 switches provided, as well as greater bandwidth than their interswitch links.

“Our QLogic SANbox 5602 switches are great. They took us a long way,” says Beres. “But today, we need a large, nonblocking switch to take the next step in performance.”

The 15 editing workstations, along with digital video recording, ingest and color correction, would use over 100 ports alone. But Beres also wanted to double the number of connections to the 10 MediaVault storage devices and the three Apple Xserver servers. An audio room and special color-correction theater were also to be included in the Fibre Channel connection expansion. All told, Beres and his colleagues would quickly require 128 ports operating at 4Gbps.

“Once again QLogic helped our bottom line with a SAN switch that speeds up the work of our editors and enables us to provide better services to our clients.”

– Stephen Beres, Chief Technical Officer, PlasterCITY Digital Post

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■ PCDP relies on QLogic again for more performance

According to Beres, the QLogic SANbox 9200 switch was ideal for their needs. "With 128 ports and scalability to 256 ports, the switch has all the capacity we need to accommodate our needs today and support our growth over the next several years," he said. "And because the switch is nonblocking, it allows us to grow without affecting performance."

QLogic's support for the Macintosh computing environment convinced Beres to upgrade with QLogic. "QLogic administrative software is designed for the Mac," Beres says. "With other SAN switch vendors, Macintosh software is often not as good as the Windows versions."

The price of the switch also made the SANbox 9200 easy to choose, according to Beres. "QLogic offered us a 4Gbps switch at a third of the price of similar offerings from other vendors," he says. "The SANbox 9200 switch is affordable to acquire, not to mention being inexpensive to expand and manage."

PCDP editors immediately see throughput increase by 30 percent

Installation was rapid and nondisruptive. QLogic engineers had the 9000 up and running in a few hours on a Sunday afternoon. "It was a very easy transition," Beres says. "And there has been absolutely no downtime."

Initial results from the SANbox 9200 switch have been impressive. "After a couple weeks, we have seen performance increase by 30 to 35 percent," reports Beres.

PCDP clients have seen the effects of the speedup, too. "We can now support many more workstations displaying real-time high-definition video," Beres says, "so clients who use our facilities to do their own editing and postproduction work are more productive. The new SAN switch lets us provide real-time playback in more formats—and this helps with client

creativity. It also has something to do with how we have a full house of customers every day of the work week."

As the quality of output has grown, the quantity of work has also increased. Beres says, "We are now able to do more rendering, color-correcting, and compositing without increasing staff or the number of workstations."

SANbox 9200

The QLogic SANbox 9200 stackable chassis switch, with Designed-to-the-Core™ features, is a unique, state-of-the-art Fibre Channel switch for 4Gbps SANs in mission-critical environments that demand 99.999% uptime. The switch scales from 128 to 256 ports and offers Fibre Channel, iSCSI, and FCIP card options to completely address the SAN and WAN requirements of an enterprise. Unlike director-class switches, the SANbox 9000 is a 4U stackable switch with port cards and CPU blades, which simply slide into the front of the chassis. The SANbox 9000 is also equipped with redundant power and cooling systems to provide high availability for its users.

Key Features

- High density, 16-port, auto-discovery 4Gb/2Gb/1Gb fibre channel I/O blade
- Hot-pluggable, redundant components to meet high-availability standards
- 4-port 10Gb I/O blade for ISLs
- HyperStack™ chassis to modularly increase the port count to 256
- Command line or GUI-based Enterprise Management Suite of tools provided
- Non disruptive code load and activation (NDCLA)
- Power-on Self-Test (POST), online/offline diagnostics, and per-port statistics
- Error detection, fault isolation and remote notification of system events
- Free software allows monitoring and configuring switches and host bus adapters from one central location
- Interoperability with all major servers and storage and networking devices provides a quick path for cost-effective growth of existing SAN environments



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