“The technology infrastructure is important. A lot of clients ask us, ‘can you cope with data? Is it secure? Is it backed up?’ With this product we don’t have to worry about it.”

Fredrik Limsater
CTO, Fido

Fido

INDUSTRY  Digital Visual Effects

SOLUTIONS  Network Storage
Hardware — BlueArc® Mercury 100
Fido Opens the Door to Creativity and Growth for Visual Effects with Advanced Network Storage

**Summary**

In just the 10 years since it was founded, Fido has become one of the largest providers of visual effects and animation in Scandinavia. With an outstanding international reputation and clientele, its work on character and creature animation has set new standards in the industry. Now, the company would like to expand even further.

Fido aspires to create a full Hollywood blockbuster movie. In order to take on this more challenging work, Fido had to upgrade its storage infrastructure. It needed technology solutions to operate at the same level of excellence as its artists and animators. Since moving to a BlueArc network storage solution, Fido has seen significant improvement in the performance, scalability and stability of its technology infrastructure. This step forward has given its artists the foundation and tools to continue creating exciting and innovative work in commercials and feature films.

**The Challenge**

Founded in 2001, Fido has built a reputation for excellent work. They are particularly known for work in creature and character development, such as hair, fur rendering and character animation. As the company’s reputation grew, so did its international clientele, and aspirations. Fido wanted to take on more challenging work, but found that its technology was not up to the task. To solve this problem, they hired a CTO with world-class skills and international experience, Fredrik Limsater, who joined the company in 2008.

“When I joined they had 4-5TB of storage and it was really slow,” Limsater recalls. “One of the first projects I took on was to change that. What we did first was to build our own system, buying used gear from eBay. It worked, but after time we realized it was impossible to support and it was just too unreliable.” One of the problems with the in-house system was performance. Visual effects, animation and rendering all require high levels of IOPS, with many machines accessing lots of data, often at the same time. “Our system just couldn’t keep pace to serve the data,” Limsater says.
The Solution

When Fido decided to move away from its homegrown solution, it tested products from 3 leading vendors. “We found them to be the best company,” Limsater says. “Many of our partners in London were already using it and they had only good things to say about it, and that was a large part of what we based our decision on.” Fido now has a BlueArc Mercury 100 network storage solution. The company started with 30TB of usable space and within 8 months added an additional 20TB.

The demand for additional storage capacity will continue as the workload grows and as Fido expands into doing additional high-performance and high-capacity projects, such as 3D and post production. "The solution is easy to scale up and that’s one of the reasons we went with it. We can easily add more nodes and cluster if we want to,” Limsater says. “We know we are going to outgrow what we have – we’ll be about 100TB in the near future – and we know we can build on what we have. With this product, we know it will work even in the future. We also have a need for speed. We have a large render farm, at least by Swedish standards, of about 500 cores and we know we can add 500 more cores and not have the server lock up.”

Fido is currently using 2 tiers of storage, with about 30TB of type-1 storage and 20TB of nearline storage. The BlueArc solution also supports the Fido research and development department, which does software development, asset management and pipeline development. They have also created a number of in-house systems to support the company’s efforts, including FTrack Workflow and Asset Management System, which is integrated into all Fido work, and other solutions such as SpeedFur, Speed SPH and Fido Ocean Toolkit.

The Results

The performance improvement at Fido has been both significant and noticeable. “It’s much quicker to open a Maya file when we are 40 people in the house. When we play back tapes from the server the overall speed of access is so much better,” Limsater says. “I know this is very important because I had to deal with so many complaints so many times a day with the earlier system and now we don’t hear any complaints, which means it just works. If it takes even a second longer to open a file, that’s irritating to the artists. Since we got the BlueArc solution, they’re very happy.”

In addition to the speed, performance, scalability and stability of the BlueArc solutions, Limsater is also impressed with the support team. “I would like to mention their support, which is outstanding,” he says. “We have a technical guy and we can call him whenever. When he’s in Stockholm he always comes to check on us. We’ve had a couple of times where we’ve had bad luck with batteries and it was fixed quickly.

When we were doing our tape library we also had to talk to technical support and now it works great. One of the reasons we went with this company was their reputation for support was excellent.”

The Conclusion

Fido was recently acquired, and the new owners plan to seize the opportunity to be the top studio in and use that platform to expand the Fido presence worldwide. “We want to take on bigger and bigger projects,” Limsater says. “We want to take on a whole movie. We’ve done great work on projects such as ‘Kick-Ass’ and ‘Attack the Block’, but we haven’t done the whole show. We would like to do a Hollywood blockbuster.” The BlueArc solution is critical to that strategy because it gives Fido the ability to take on new challenges. It also gives its customers and partners the assurance that Fido has the technology infrastructure to do the quality of work they require. “The technology infrastructure is important,” Limsater says. “A lot of clients ask us: ‘Can you cope with data? Is it secure? Is it backed up?’ With this solution we don’t have to worry about it.”

More Information

- Fido: http://www.fido.se