

# TRACE VFX

## Visual effects company establishes industry niche with EMC Isilon scale-out NAS



### ESSENTIALS

#### Industry

Media and Entertainment

#### Company Size

200

#### Business Challenges

- Strong demand for VFX services
- Impending move to new premises
- Expansion into new service lines

#### Solutions

- EMC Isilon X-Series
- VMware vSphere

#### Results

- Enabled complete deployment within only two hours
- Improves productivity
- Scales to meet 50 percent projected growth
- Supports future expansion plans

CUSTOMER PROFILE

### OVERVIEW

Trace VFX (Trace) is a New York-based visual effects (VFX) outsourcing firm specializing in the delivery of VFX prep and 3D work, with all visual effects produced in the company's Mumbai office. Established in 2011, Trace has worked on VFX for more than a dozen Super Bowl ads, series such as The Game of Thrones, and several major motion pictures.

### BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Trace provides visual effects outsourcing services such as rotoscoping, clean up, tracking, keying, and 3D animation to global media and entertainment companies. Over three years the company grew from seven to 180 employees and had the capacity to expand its services across a range of visual effects projects. Within two years of opening, the company moved into its current 7,000 square-foot premises in central Mumbai, enabling the hiring of more staff and the introduction of a full-service 3D department.

The previous in-house built NAS storage supported the original capacity of 25 employees in the company's first office, but could not meet the performance and scalability required by a growing workforce delivering an increasing number of projects.

Matthew Herman, Chief Technology Officer, says, "The storage supported our initial business up to the point where we began to outgrow our first office in Mumbai. We knew we would be moving to a space that was about four times the size and we needed to expand our IT infrastructure to match the capabilities of our new office environment."

Trace evaluated solutions from EMC, NetApp, Hitachi, and Red Hat before selecting EMC® Isilon® scale-out NAS.

"The EMC Isilon value proposition made sense for us in terms of making an investment in proven storage, rather than taking a gamble. Isilon is a really solid product for a business where you don't know how big you're going to be in the next few months or years because of the way projects and contracts expand in the visual effects industry," says Herman.

### SOLUTIONS

The company runs a virtualized infrastructure comprising an Isilon X-Series cluster and SuperMicro and Dell servers running VMware® vSphere™. Isilon provides Trace with a flexible, clustered storage infrastructure that can be scaled within minutes and ensures optimal storage utilization for the growing business. This enables the company to cost effectively transition its focus to higher value visual effects outsourcing such as paint and compositing, without having to purchase new hardware.

Herman says, "Storage within a modern visual effects shop is critical—if it goes down you lose everything. If you are an organization of our size, and you need high availability to ensure consistent, timely delivery to your clients, then you need to make an investment in storage and Isilon is a great product."

### **ACCELERATES DEPLOYMENT TO NEW PREMISES**

The EMC storage infrastructure was deployed within the company's original premises. When Trace moved to its new office, the entire cluster was moved within two hours. The simplified administration of Isilon means that it is quick to configure and easy for Herman to maintain without additional support. This means he can focus on the company's continued expansion into new VFX outsourcing areas.

"It's a very quick, easy deployment and took about two hours to get the Isilon storage up and running after we moved. Due to its stability, Isilon requires very little of my time in terms of maintenance," says Herman.

### **IMPROVES PRODUCTIVITY ON VFX PROJECTS**

Trace runs visual effects creation and editing software, using Nuke for paint/composing, Silhouette for rotoscoping, 3D Equalizer for camera tracking, and Autodesk Maya for 3D animation. EMC storage is enabling greater productivity as demand for the company's services continues to grow.

Herman says, "If I can save five minutes on each render, and over the course of a year and a half we complete between 5,000 to 7,000 renders, that means valuable time saved and money earned. The faster we can render, the faster our clients get their projects completed."

**"Storage plays such a critical role in modern visual effects and EMC Isilon gives us the flexibility to develop new services and continue towards our goal of being the best at what we do in India."**

Matthew Herman  
Chief Technology Officer at Trace VFX

### **SCALES TO MEET 50 PERCENT PROJECTED GROWTH**

As a media and entertainment company requiring fast access to massive numbers of video files requiring large amounts storage, Trace has seen the benefits of deploying an efficient, flexible storage solution that can linearly scale bandwidth and performance. The company recently added another 3,000 square feet of office space to cater to its expanding workforce. The company's storage demands will rise as a result.

"The ease of scalability of Isilon was a main selling point for us. As we move into the 3D animation space, we expect to achieve 50 percent growth over the next year. We can simply add nodes as we need them. That's the advantage of Isilon storage—we can easily scale performance and capacity at the same time," says Herman.

### **PERFORMANCE INCREASES AUTOMATICALLY**

In focusing on the short-form market for visual effects in the television and advertising markets, Trace works on more than 50 projects a month. Data is shared between the Mumbai and New York offices, and the entire media workflow collaboration accesses the Isilon storage. With the addition of a node, performance increases automatically.

The reliable, high performance infrastructure supports the company's goal to deliver industry leading customer service.

Herman says, "In a highly competitive market, I know we provide better customer service than other visual effects companies working out of India. We are never late in delivering to deadlines and with Isilon, we don't experience downtime—which is why our clients keep coming back."

### **SUPPORTS FUTURE EXPANSION PLANS**

With Trace's move into providing 3D animation prep and work beginning on TV commercials for developing markets, the company continues to expand its skills as a highly sought after visual effects company.

Herman says, "As I am one of the founders of Trace, when we invested in the new infrastructure, it was also my money involved in the decision. Storage plays such a critical role in modern visual effects and EMC Isilon gives us the flexibility to develop new services and continue towards our goal of being the best at what we do in India."

## **CONTACT US**

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