

Digital Agency Discovers Creative Solution for its Data Storage Needs with DroboElite



COBRA CREATIVE

Company Background

San Francisco-based Cobra Creative is an eight-person boutique agency specializing in internet marketing strategy and design, motion graphics, and websites. The firm works with many well-known companies like NFL Networks, Verizon, Clif Bar, and Autodesk to create compelling social experiences that merge broadcast and interactivity in entertaining ways.

Challenge: Capacity and Throughput

In the course of their work, Cobra's motion and interactive designers create huge data files. To store and provide designers with access to these files, the firm had purchased two first-generation Drobo storage devices from Data Robotics in late 2007. These were connected over firewire to an old Apple G4 running HornWare: SharePoints as a central files server.

This setup worked for a while, but by late 2009, rapid growth was threatening to max out the capacity of the two Drobo units. An even greater concern was the throughput over the network. High-resolution video files could be as large as 4 to 5 Gigabits, bringing the network to a standstill whenever a motion designer downloaded a file.

Jason Csizmadi, Senior Art Director, who is also responsible for Cobra's networking infrastructure, began researching a storage solution that would deliver the scalability and performance the firm needed.

Solution: Simple, Fast — DroboElite

Under consideration was a high-end, standalone system dedicated to the motion designers.

"I looked at RAID and NAS drives. The products out there were all very technical," says Csizmadi. "I didn't want to have to set up and manage a complicated RAID configuration or deal with lost data due to a failed drive. That scared me."

Then Cobra Creative learned of the DroboElite, a cost-effective, simple-to-manage solution that met both capacity and data transfer requirements for Cobra. The DroboElite could hold up to eight disks—as much as 16 terabytes. Adding capacity was as simple as inserting a new hard drive—on the fly—into an empty bay, or swapping out a smaller drive for a larger one. And it provided two iSCSI interfaces for fast data transfers—even for large video files. *"The first Drobos were so easy to set up. We figured the DroboElite would be just as easy," says Csizmadi.*

Quick Facts

Challenge

- Insufficient bandwidth to access stored data
- Maxed out storage
- Looking for easy-to-manage solution
- Drive failure protection

Solution

- Data Robotics DroboElite™ Storage Solution

Benefits

- Set-and-forget simplicity
- Instant scalability with BeyondRAID
- Dual high-performance iSCSI ports
- Single- or dual-drive redundancy
- Self-healing capabilities

"I'm an art director, not a network storage expert. The best thing about the DroboElite is the simplicity of it. It's basically plug and play. I don't have to worry about any of the technical issues that those other solutions have. I've activated the administrative alert feature that sends me an email when we're running out of room. And because it's connected directly to the Mac mini server with a static IP address, I can even manage it remotely from home..."

Installation was a snap. *"As soon as I got it, I connected it to the Mac mini server in no time at all with absolutely no problems,"* recalls Csizmadi. *"We purchased a couple of 2-terabyte drives and plugged them in. Then I plugged in some old drives just to see how it worked."* DroboElite supports any 3.5" SATA drives from any supplier, which can cost as little as one-fifth as much as proprietary drives.

For extra protection, Csizmadi repurposed the older Drobo units for data backup, running a program called ChronoSync automatically at midnight each night.

Benefits

The productivity of Cobra Creative's staff is no longer hindered by a constrained network.

"Our motion designers render right off the server at the same time our Web and design people are accessing files and we haven't had any performance problems," says Csizmadi.

DroboElite's self-managing, self-healing architecture eliminates nearly all routine management tasks for Csizmadi. *"I'm an art director, not a network storage expert. The best thing about the DroboElite is the simplicity of it. It's basically plug and play. I don't have to worry about any of the technical issues that those other solutions have. I've activated the administrative alert feature that sends me an email when we're running out of room. And because it's connected directly to the Mac mini server with a static IP address, I can even manage it remotely from home."*

DroboElite has given Csizmadi peace of mind. *"If one of the drives fails, it will alert me. Plus, it will move the data to another drive. I'm not worried about losing data."* DroboElite even has the ability to protect against data loss due to the simultaneous failure of two drives with a dual-drive redundancy feature.



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- Csizmadi