



Case Study



Digital Dimension Increases Capacity with the Digipede Network

Grid Computing Adds More Whiz & Bang to Production of Visual Effects

Ever wonder how they pull off those jaw-dropping effects in your favorite action movies? Not only does it take creativity and artistic skill, but also a serious level of computing power. Grid computing is ideal for such an intense and demanding application.

The Company

Digital Dimension is an innovative, award-winning studio that specializes in high-end visual effects, 3D animation, and motion graphics for the film, television, and interactive industries. Some of the studio's effects are invisible to the casual viewer, integrated seamlessly into real world scenarios, while others go all out to suspend disbelief and defy reality; in either case, Digital Dimension strives to support the story above all else. The studio has worked on the ABC hit series *Lost*, and on movies such as *The Last Samurai*, *Die Hard 4*, *Blades of Glory*, and *Norbit*, and has won six Emmy and three Visual Effects Society awards.

The Challenge

As Digital Dimension's business grew, the complexity of its IT infrastructure increased accordingly. "Our digital content creation business was booming, and we acquired a lot of hardware and specialized software for leading-edge visual effects," said Ben Girard, president of Digital Dimension.

In many cases, individual graphics packages were working only through application-specific schedulers. With so many projects having different requirements and deadlines, managing all of the compute-intensive applications required to produce cutting-edge digital content was becoming a serious bottleneck.

In addition, with multiple projects from many different clients running concurrently, the studio had poor visibility into its entire workload; as a result, it was difficult to assess accurately the time and resources needed to complete each project.

"As the number of simultaneous projects grew, we realized that we needed a way to manage our resources smoothly," continued Girard. Digital Dimension considered a few alternatives, including managing the existing infrastructure better, or utilizing one of the available solutions for the rendering industry. And then they got an evaluation copy of the Digipede Network.



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The Solution: Blockbuster Grid Computing

The Digipede Network is an affordable distributed computing solution built entirely on Microsoft .NET that delivers dramatically increased performance for processes that require significant computing horsepower.

Digital Dimension selected Digipede for several reasons. The Digipede Network offers greater control and flexibility than any other solution for Microsoft development environments. In Digital Dimension's case, adopting the Digipede Network allowed the studio to manage multiple applications critical to their production workflow, as well as digital content creation across hundreds of diverse CPUs. Girard put it simply: "A closed system application scheduler just doesn't cut it any more. Digipede takes care of the grid computing, so our team can focus on great content creation."

In addition, the Digipede Network ties directly into the studio's internal collaboration platform, thereby providing a far more complete picture of the entire production pipeline. Girard and his production managers are able to get valuable business intelligence that was simply unavailable before using Digipede's solution.

The Results: Future Growth – Coming to a Theater Near You!

Integrating the Digipede Network into Digital Dimension's infrastructure immediately provided greater visibility. By gaining a single window into all current projects, the studio's design and production teams are better able to meet deadlines and adapt quickly to fluctuating schedules—a typical condition of the entertainment business.

Looking forward, Ben Girard is confident that Digital Dimension is ready and able to ramp up production while maintaining the studio's innovation, high production standards, and responsiveness to clients—all without having to add new IT staff. "We can be much more responsive to the changing requirements of our clients as we take on new projects. We've positioned ourselves for future growth."

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President, Digital Dimension