PIXSTOR AND ADOBE

IN HIGH SPEED HARMONY

WITH THE SUPPORT OF PIXIT AND ESCAPE WE DON'T NEED TO THINK ABOUT OUR STORAGE

To say that London-based creative digital agency DMS needs to work fast is something of an understatement. Providing a 360-degree service to clients including major film studios, sports associations, and lifestyle brands DMS is creating, localising, managing and distributing content throughout the world 24-hours a day.
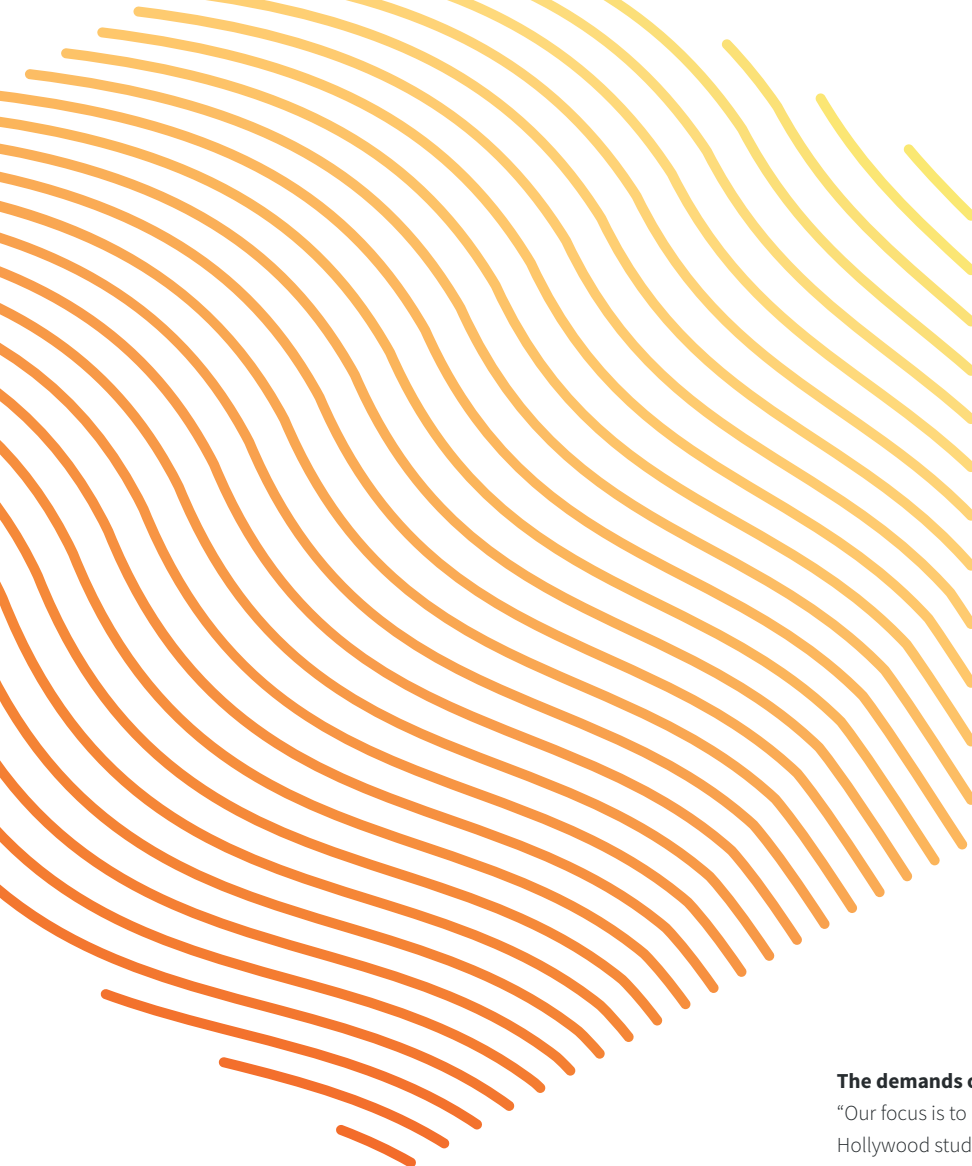
With such a diverse range of clients comes an equally wide range of services, which means DMS' London Bridge office boasts a team made up of Production, Editing, Graphics, Audio, Analytics, Technical, and QC departments – around 160 people in total. And with the agency working purely digitally, fast, reliable, and flexible storage is absolutely essential to success. ➝

"ESCAPE TECHNOLOGY IS A GREAT PARTNER, NOT JUST A SUPPLIER. YOU UNDERSTAND OUR BUSINESS AND WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE."

The demands of localisation

"Our focus is to help and support major Hollywood studios when they release a film theatrically," explains Neil Bottrill, Digital Operations Manager at DMS. "So we work with all the promotional content that surrounds a feature film, including trailers, TV spots, and social media."

"Localisation is one of the key production services we offer the studios. We take existing content and localise it across Latin America, Asia Pacific, and EMEA so around 65 territories."

The workflow is based around Adobe Creative Cloud. "For each job we receive different files at different frame rates," clarifies Andrew Sheahan, Technical Manager. "Within each of those files are two versions of the deliverable – one with text and one without. We use Adobe Premiere Pro to localise the audio, graphics, and subtitles, then export out with Media Encoder. And each person is doing three or four of those every minute."

Escape Technology Project Team
Jason Jenner – Commercial Director
Lee Danskin – Chief Technology Officer
Tim Harcourt – Senior Systems Engineer
Joe Rowswell – Engineer
Cameron Eaton – Sales Executive

PixStor: speed and reliability

The responsibility for handling access, sharing, and storing this data falls to a PixStor from Pixit Media. This software-defined central storage system is well known for its speed and reliability – equally capable of handling VFX and editorial workflows. "With the support of Pixit and Escape," continues Neil, "it's now just storage that we don't even need to think about. It works, it works well. It's just in the background supporting the business 24 hours a day."

When it came to choosing storage that could keep up with both the pace of the work and the expansion of the team, DMS worked closely with Escape Technology before selecting a two node PixStor cluster with 168TB raw capacity as its main system with a second, single-node 168TB PixStor as disaster recovery at a separate location.

"The storage we had before was SAN, and it was end-of-life," says Neil. "Speeds were good initially, but it wasn't very robust and needed lots and lots of support. Escape did the due diligence with us when we were reviewing storage solutions and came up with a range of solutions, including the PixStor. One of the key reasons we chose it was the scalability – we can add extra storage onto it easily without shutting it down. It's based on commodity hardware so it's cost effective to purchase. Speed, reliability, support, and scalability – they were differentiators."

Exporting while working

The workflow to and from the PixStor is accelerated by a Mellanox 10GB/40GB switching infrastructure, which means there's no downtime for the teams when it comes to accessing data to work on, or even when exporting files.

For Andrew, this is one of PixStor's greatest qualities. "I just love that you can export out, but just carry on working," he smiles. "It's the best thing about it. The speed of PixStor is a godsend. We can have about 20 tech ops, 15 graphics, and three or four audio people all working at the same time, all grabbing files, sharing between each other and different departments."

With tiered storage based on the speed needed by the user (from 24 fps 2K playback to simple archiving), the PixStor ensures that the multiple clients never get in each other's way – and all with a single global namespace.

Backup and archiving

The PixStor also comes into its own when backing up data and, should it ever be needed, disaster recovery. Thanks to its APSync feature and ability to carry out multithreaded operations, data migration and backups are completed in the fastest and most efficient way, with changes to files and directories identified and copied rather than every piece of data.

With our recommended solution now proving its worth on a daily basis, how does Neil feel about us? "Escape Technology is a great partner, not just a supplier. You understand our business and what we're trying to achieve. We can ask questions and you're very aware of what's in the market."

All in all, the guaranteed performance of the PixStor working in tandem with Adobe Creative Cloud has helped DMS flourish in a world where 'coming soon' is only acceptable on the screen, not in the workflow.