Quantum

CASE STUDY

Leading Megachurch Relies on StorNext to Move Worship Services Outside the Walls

When its aging workflow system couldn't keep up with video production demands, Willow Creek Community Church switched to StorNext Pro Studio. The new workflow slashed the time needed to air services from hours to minutes and gave multiple users shared access to a common archive—dramatically cutting the time needed to create new programming.

WILLOW CREEK
COMMUNITY CHURCH

FEATURED PRODUCTS

StorNext® 5

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SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- StorNext® Pro Studio
  - QXS™-1200 RAID arrays
  - StorNext M441 metadata controller
  - StorNext G302 gateway appliance
  - StorNext AEL500 tape archive
  - Storage Manager
- Levels Beyond Reach Engine media asset manager
- Telestream Pipeline and Telestream Vantage transcoder
- Brocade 6505 fibre channel switch
- Adobe Creative Cloud

KEY BENEFITS

- End-to-end workflow solution provides single point of access to all storage and resources, streamlining media production and distribution
- Direct ingest system lets editors work on content during church services, team can air content within minutes of services
- Integrated media asset management gives editors shared access to files through a common interface, allowing fewer editors to produce more content in less time
- Streamlined workflow simplifies review and approval cycles by giving multiple users in different locations direct access to work in progress
- Integrated archive system improves protection of assets, and gives users fast direct access to existing content for reuse
- The StorNext partial file retrieval feature saves time and money by allowing editors to restore only the portions of archived files needed for a project
- Increased efficiency saves the organization $120,000 a year

Founded in 1975, Willow Creek Community Church is one of the largest churches in the United States, hosting an average of 26,000 attendees each weekend in multiple services at its primary worship center in South Barrington, Illinois. The Church has expanded to include seven regional congregations within its immediate community, each supported by its own clergy and staff, and the Willow Creek Association, a nonprofit organization that provides support, training, and materials for more than 18,000 other churches around the world.

VIDEO AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLAY CRUCIAL ROLE IN MINISTRY

Willow Creek's institutional mission is to build life-changing communities of faith that reach the largest possible number of congregants. Church leaders recognized a decade ago that harnessing the power of video could be an important tool in extending the church's message to those unable to attend traditional services—allowing members to listen to sermons and teachings multiple times, and producing educational and inspirational programs for the larger Christian community. To accomplish this goal, the church added a video team, and invested in a SAN-based workflow system and digital asset management software.

"We capture all our services on video, so that we can provide a service to those unable to attend, or who want to see the message again, or to provide resources to small groups to support different activities around the church," explains Brian McAuliffe, Willow Creek Community Church CFO. The team also saves recorded material, using content from earlier broadcasts to create new programming.

EXISTING WORKFLOW SYSTEM NO LONGER UP TO THE TASK

But as the storage and workflow system—which was built using hardware and software from several different vendors—aged, some vendors stopped supporting the installation, and it became difficult to use and manage.

"In the old SAN, content from a service was captured on hard drives in the cameras," explains John Connolly, director of sales and marketing at Key Code Media, the specialist integrator that Willow Creek brought in to help Willow Creek upgrade its system. "Those drives then had to be brought to the video team and downloaded before they could begin the editing

needed for rebroadcast. The process was slow and manual, and it could be hours after a service was over before it could be made available on video. That was too long."

Creating material that reused existing content was even more complex because accessing archived material was a manual process that required bringing back large files to disk, and then extracting the portions needed.

EXPERIENCED INTEGRATOR HELPS FIND THE RIGHT UPGRADE SOLUTION

Key Code Media presented several different options, including upgrading selected portions of the existing system or replacing it with new solutions. After conducting a careful total cost of ownership (TCO) review, the Willow Creek team decided to replace their entire storage infrastructure and workflow system with a new StorNext Pro Studio solution; Reach Engine, a digital asset management system from Levels Beyond; and Telestream Pipeline and Vantage for ingest and transcoding.

StorNext Pro Studio is a fully integrated workflow solution. The Willow Creek configuration includes the StorNext data management platform with 100TB of high-performance disk and an LTO taped-based StorNext AEL500 Archive, all connected directly to the Willow Creek SAN. Reach Engine works with StorNext to manage assets, letting editors see all of the content directly, both on the live disk and in the tape archive. Telestream Vantage enables direct ingest of content into the shared work environment and automates the process of transcoding finished content for different platforms and formats.

TIME TO AIR SLASHED TO MINUTES

In the new workflow, content from cameras is ingested directly to the StorNext SAN while filming is underway, eliminating one of the major delays from the old system. Editors can access the files in a shared SAN environment while the service is still going on, dramatically reducing the time needed to air material.

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ARCHIVE PROTECTS DATA, SHORTENS TIME FOR CONTENT REUSE

The new solution also provides better protection for the assets and creates an active archive that accelerates production for new programming as well. As data is ingested or created on disk, the StorNext software automatically creates multiple copies in the tape library. One copy is retained in the library as an archive copy while a second copy can be moved off-site for long-term protection. After data is no longer being actively used, it is deleted from the SAN to create space for new projects, but all the content still exists in the archive, where it is both safe and available. Reach Engine presents all the content—whether on disk or tape—to the editing teams, allowing them to see and access any file directly.

"One of the nicest features of StorNext for speeding up work is its partial-file retrieval feature," explains Connolly. "Instead of bringing back all of a large video file when all the team needs is a small section, StorNext allows an editor to choose which part of the file to move back to disk. It is faster and saves money on disk space as well."

SYSTEM SAVES TIME AND $120,000 A YEAR

With the new system, time savings are dramatic. "With the old system, between finding and downloading files, editing them, and moving them around to different sites for the review and approval loop, a typical project could see long delays," says McAuliffe. "With StorNext, editors download only the content they need. Editors and reviewers have direct, shared access to the files, and the typical production cycle is now much faster."

Financial savings are also substantial. The boost in efficiency was so great that the team recently decided to forgo the planned hiring of

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ABOUT WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH

Willow Creek Community Church (or simply Willow Creek Church) is a nondenominational, multi-generational Evangelical Christian megachurch located in the Chicago suburb of South Barrington, Illinois. It was founded in 1975 by Bill Hybels, who is currently the senior pastor. The church has three weekend services averaging 26,000 attendees at its South Barrington worship center, making it one of the largest churches in the United States. Willow Creek Church has been a leader in using technology, including video and social media, to expand its ability to reach a broad range of worshippers both in its home region and around the world.
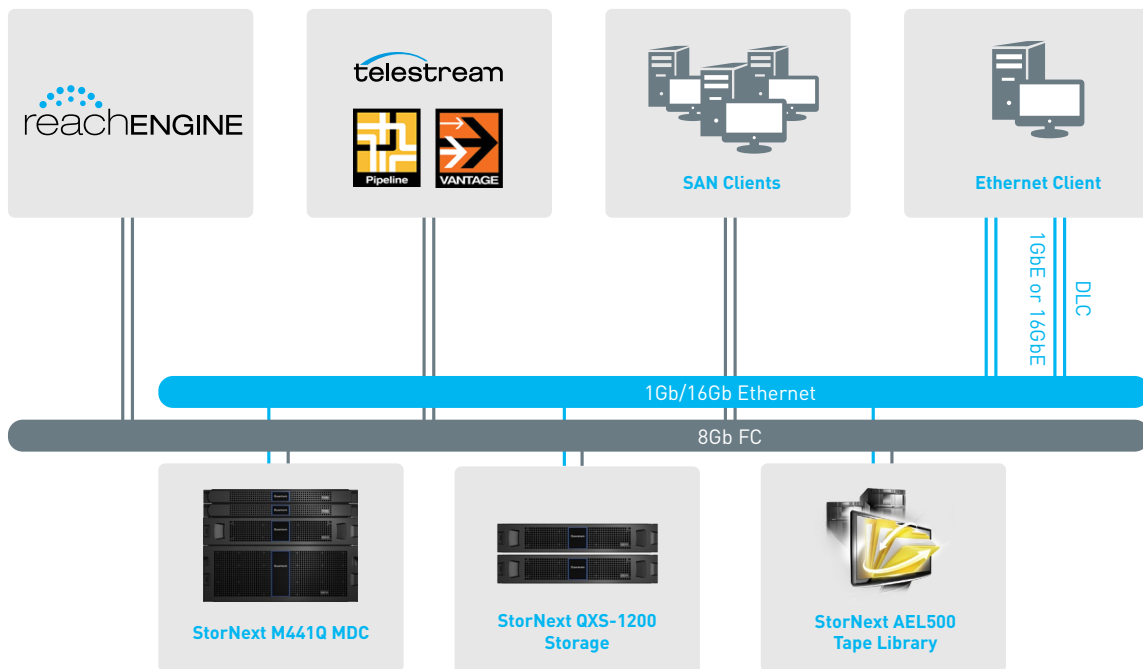
two additional editors. Copyright checks are faster and more accurate since the Reach Engine asset manager includes legal ownership metadata, which protects the team from inadvertent use-rights conflicts. The StorNext system can scale performance and capacity separately, making it economical to grow in the future.

And the archive has a capacity-on-demand growth model where slots can be activated and licensed only when they are needed.

"Overall, we estimate that the StorNext Pro Studio and Levels Beyond solution is saving us $120,000 each year," McAuliffe says. "We realize that as we go into the future, we are not going to be able to

accomplish our goals and reach everyone we want to reach inside this building," McAuliffe concludes. "We purposely made the decision to reach out beyond the walls, and the solution that we chose was Quantum and Levels Beyond. It gives us the ability to take our ministry anywhere we want to in the future."

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