UFA

FILM PRODUCTION WITH THE CLOUD

Transport vehicles that commute daily carrying data storage devices between film location, editing studio and archive – a process that seems to be almost from a bygone era. And yet, this is still standard practice in the film industry today. In order to save transport costs and become more efficient, UFA was looking for a digital solution.

The leading German film production company has recently started using the Open Telekom Cloud as part of a proof of concept. At the end of a day of shooting, the film material is fed into storage systems – from where it is automatically transferred to the cloud via the Internet. Film editors and producers can then access the material from any location.

UFA implemented the solution together with Telekom. The new cloud workflow fits seamlessly into the existing post-production processes. The only difference is that the number of delivery vehicles that commute daily with hard drives is reduced. But that is by no means all. UFA has now laid the foundation for film production in the cloud.

AT A GLANCE

The Task: Every day, delivery vehicles commuted hundreds of kilometers between the film location and the archive in order to supply all those involved in the production chain with the raw material. UFA wanted to simplify this process in order to save costs and become more flexible and agile overall.

The Solution: A fully automated cloud workflow: Telekom and UFA developed a solution whereby raw material is loaded into the Open Telekom Cloud. After a shoot, video data automatically flows via the Internet to Telekom's highly secure data centers.

The Advantages: Transporters that bring hard disks to the archive become superfluous. Post-production teams have access to raw material from anywhere and can work with it directly. They load the result back into the cloud – where it is automatically archived. It's an increase in efficiency that saves UFA a huge amount of money.

THE CUSTOMER: UFA GMBH

Founded over 100 years ago as Universum Film AG, today UFA GmbH is Germany's market leader in the field of film and television production. In that time, the company has developed from a pure maker and producer of TV shows and films to a comprehensive content specialist offering digital and multimedia content – for all the major broadcasters in Germany as well as for numerous other partners.

THE CHALLENGE

Only a few people are aware of the enormous effort involved in professional film productions. Depending on the complexity of a scene, several days of shooting are required for just a few minutes of film, during which many terabytes of raw material are produced. But how does this material get from the film location to the studio headquarters, where it is further processed? Many TV production companies rely on vans carrying hard disks that commute between the film locations, post-production and archive.

UFA, for example, could be filming in Cologne and then editing in Potsdam-Babelsberg, 550 kilometers away. In order to improve the distribution process, UFA's CIO Ernst Feiler is focusing on digitalization: The delivery vehicles are to be replaced by digital processes and cloud technologies. This not only protects the environment but also saves enormous costs. "But this is only a first step," says Feiler. "In the long term, we want our entire company to become more agile by digitalizing the entire production process chain."

THE SOLUTION

The new cloud workflow had to fit seamlessly into the existing processes. "Deutsche Telekom was the first company we approached because it doesn't just provide cloud services, but also the network infrastructure," says Feiler. "In combination with the highest level of data security and data protection, this resulted in an overall package that made Telekom the best possible provider. In addition, the cooperation with Deutsche Telekom doesn't create any competitive conflict – unlike some other cloud providers who are also active in the film business."

Telekom experts therefore developed a media storage solution in the Open Telekom Cloud for UFA that is automatically fed via data networks and seamlessly integrates into the production process. Widely applied standards were used for the storage protocol for

Ernst Feiler, Director Technology at UFA, plans to transfer further process steps into the Open Telekom Cloud.

communication with the cloud and for the software. This leads to a reduction of both costs and complexity compared to individual software and hardware. The use of existing storage systems also helps to keep the workflow largely unchanged for the users.

THE CUSTOMER BENEFITS

After the film shoot, storage media from the cameras are connected to a Network Attached Storage (NAS) system. Previously, the NAS was then handed over to a courier. Today, the film material comes via the data highway – at locations with suitable connectivity – instead of by road: As soon as it has been fed into the NAS, the system automatically sends the raw data to the Open Telekom Cloud. It is then available to everyone involved in the process chain. Afterwards, the finished clips from post-production are synchronized with the cloud archive.

UFA is currently in the proof-of-concept phase of the project. After this is completed, many of the road transports are to be replaced by the full cloud workflow. "The next step will be for us to transfer further process steps into the Open Telekom Cloud: from quality checks and transcoding to editing," says UFA CIO Feiler. "With our automated cloud storage workflow, we have now laid the essential foundation for production in the cloud."

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PUBLISHED BY:

Telekom Deutschland GmbH
Business customers
Landgrabenweg 151
53227 Bonn, Germany

Date: November 2018

LIFE IS FOR SHARING.