

CUSTOMER STORY

Hive VFX

can take on any size project with an all-cloud pipeline, enabled by Teradici Cloud Access Software and AWS



Founded in 2019, Hive VFX provides visual special effects for film, TV, and commercials. The studio is known for beauty fixes and “gore enhancements” for realistic-looking cuts, blood, etc. Titles include *Spenser Confidential* and *Extraction*.

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BERNIE KIMBACHER

VFX SUPERVISOR AND FOUNDER, HIVE VFX

Challenges

- Deliver an excellent experience for artists using graphics-intensive applications
- Avoid upfront capital costs for servers and storage
- Hire artists anywhere in the world for access to talent or tax incentives
- Keep client files secure

Solutions

- Cloud workstations: AWS G4 instances with NVIDIA T4 Tensor Core graphics processing units (GPUs), running Teradici Cloud Access Software
- Artist devices: Windows, Mac, or Linux workstations or laptops with Teradici software
- Peripherals: Dual monitors, Wacom devices, specialty mice

Results

- Delivered an at-home application experience equivalent to an in-studio experience
- Aligned costs with revenue by paying only for cloud resources actually needed
- Gained flexibility to take on any size job, anywhere, by spinning up new virtual machines in a nearby AWS data center
- Protected intellectual property because files never reside on artists’ personal devices



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New visual special effects (VFX) studios previously faced a high barrier to entry: purchasing powerful servers to run graphics-intensive applications used for compositing, rotoscoping, pain, warping, and morphing. “New studios typically had to take out a loan or find an investor,” says Bernie Kimbacher, Hive’s VFX supervisor and founder. “The infrastructure you could afford limited the jobs you could bid on.”

Kimbacher took a different approach when launching Hive VFX in 2019. His company operates entirely in the cloud—with no on-premises infrastructure and no physical studios. “Our idea was to pass the savings along to clients so we could make very competitive bids,” he says.

To turn the plan into reality, Hive VFX needed a way for artists to securely connect to cloud workstations over home internet connections with the same experience they’d have in a studio.

Hive VFX found a winning combination in Teradici Cloud Access Software and AWS. “Special effects requires high-res, pixel-perfect transmission, and Teradici Cloud Access Software supports up to 4K resolution on each monitor,” Kimbacher says. “It’s the gold standard in the VFX industry. None of the other remote desktop solutions I’ve tried comes anywhere near its performance.”

AWS stood out from other public clouds primarily because of its no-cost rendering manager and ease of use. “I’m an artist, and the other cloud platforms seemed to be geared to IT professionals,” says Kimbacher.

Onboarding new artists for a job is as simple as asking them to install the Teradici software on their personal devices—Windows, Mac, or Linux.

Artists just log in from their personal devices to work on virtual workstations running applications like Nuke, Mocha, and Silhouette. “Once we’ve logged in, the experience working on AWS with Teradici Cloud Access Software is just like working on a local workstation—including support for dual monitors and Wacom devices,” Kimbacher says. “With Teradici, you don’t need a business-grade internet connection to have a good experience working in the cloud.” In fact, Kimbacher once made tweaks to a project over a cellular connection, while on vacation. “Even that worked,” he says. “Teradici’s software adjusts the image quality for what the connection can handle.”

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Hive VFX uses AWS EC2 G4 instances, which include NVIDIA T4 Tensor Core graphics processing units (GPUs). The studio keeps cost down by provisioning the right amount of processing power and memory for the task—more for complex shots, less for paint-outs (shot cleanup).

Teradici Cloud Access Software keeps client data secure. Producers look for VFX studios that take security precautions such as encrypting data and not storing content on personal devices that could be lost or stolen. With Teradici Cloud Access Software, data never leaves the AWS secure data center. Only encrypted pixels travel from AWS to the artist's display.

Hive VFX can onboard artists living anywhere in the world, in minutes. Major studios spend heavily to set up locations around the world so they can hire artists in cities and countries offering tax credits to their clients. Hive VFX has that same flexibility—without the massive fixed costs for office space and on-premises servers and storage. “If a potential client wants five composers located in Australia, we just identify the talent and then spin up virtual workstations and storage in a nearby AWS data center,” Kimbacher says.

Lower overhead—no physical studios, no physical infrastructure—enables Hive VFX to make highly competitive bids. Pay-as-you-go billing eliminates the costs of servers when they're idle. When the pandemic put a halt to filming in March 2020, for instance, Hive VFX spun down its AWS instances to eliminate infrastructure costs other than storage. Instances can be spun back up in minutes.

Teradici Cloud Access Software is easy to manage. Installing Teradici Cloud Access Software on Windows, Macs, or Linux machines was “incredibly simple,” according to Kimbacher. “Not even one artist came back to me with questions.”

Kimbacher concludes, “The entire VFX industry—both new and established studios—is moving to the cloud for the flexibility. Teradici Cloud Access Software is the only remote desktop solution with the performance needed for graphics-intensive workflows.”