



For Beam, two systems are better than one for delivering — and storing — multimedia content

“Our primary system is a Titan and has been for a long time. We’ve been pleased with the reliability and support from BlueArc.

“The database systems are identical across the two sites, failing over is now much simpler and we have confidence that our secondary site will perform as well as our primary site. We want to be able to run either site at full speed with reliability in the storage and we know we can depend on BlueArc to deliver this.”

“As the BlueArc system is a consistent platform, adding new storage is straightforward and bringing new drives online is very transparent. So it’s great.”

Stephen Smallwood,
Systems Administrator, Beam

Summary

Delivering high-end multimedia commercial content around the world is a challenging proposition: ensuring it is in the correct language, delivered with no latency and is easily accessed is another! For Beam, content delivery is only part of the equation. As one of the world’s leading global distributors of digital media for commercial advertising, Beam plays, changes, sends and stores content worldwide, with one of the largest global online archives of commercial advertising material.

Beam needed a high-performance, reliable and scalable storage solution and partnered with BlueArc several years ago. When Beam needed to upgrade its backup storage and archive storage this year, it turned again to BlueArc for a solution. Beam is confident that it has two incredibly efficient and high performing storage systems that ensure its customers’ content is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

The Company

Beam is a service driven technology business that has transformed the way brands adapt, manage and distribute video content for the global digital age. They understand the value of content in engaging consumers wherever they are. Their systems simplify the process of managing, distributing and storing commercial content for an increasingly connected global marketplace.

Beam was established as a project management tool for sister company, The Mill, and has evolved to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse array of media outlets. Today they store, adapt and send thousands of assets to hundreds of television broadcasters worldwide; manage a secure archive in excess of 1,000,000 assets, and are digitally connected to every major online site. Beam has developed an intuitive and simple retail IPTV facility, which allows any user to create their own “in-store” TV channels controlled directly from their desktop.

Working with many of the world’s largest brands and agencies to manage every aspect of their commercial content, Beam continually innovates to serve the changing needs of the creative industry. As such, Beam helps make ideas come to life, then connect those ideas to any screen, anywhere, at any time through their global network.

The Challenge

Beam delivers more than 20,000 TV commercials every year, has more than 80,000 registered users, with more than 500,000 advertising stored assets. Think about how much storage space a single commercial asset can take up. Is it a 3-D animation, a 30 second or a 30-minute infomercial, or a broadcast-quality HD file? Then multiply that by half a million, which is a storage challenge in itself with just the sheer volume. But, more than that, all of that content has to be stored indefinitely and safely as Beam’s customers rely on it for archiving. And, as you might expect, these customers also need it to be accessible, to have access to their work whenever they want it.

Beam requires a high-performance, high-availability, highly reliable storage infrastructure and from the beginning they worked with BlueArc for its primary storage needs. Beam has been using a Titan 2100 network storage solution from BlueArc, supporting 75 terabytes of storage for its primary production needs.

Stephen Smallwood, Systems Administrator with The Mill, visual effects studio, explains: “Prior to using BlueArc, our secondary storage looked quite different in terms of how the computers were seeing it.”

The Solution

Beam’s solution was to purchase a BlueArc Mercury 50 network storage solution earlier this year for its backup and secondary storage requirements. The Mercury 50 has about 52 terabytes of SATA storage.

“The main reason we’ve been using BlueArc is reliability,” Smallwood says. “There’s a large amount of digital media stored within Beam in its online archiving system for commercial advertising content — it’s on there forever once it’s been uploaded”.

“Our primary system is a Titan and has been for a long time. We’ve been pleased with the reliability and support from BlueArc. With the new system we were looking for the ability to use our primary and secondary sites seamlessly and interchangeably, which we are working towards now”.

“The database systems are identical across the two sites, failing over is now much simpler and we have confidence that our secondary site will perform as well as our primary site. We want to be able to run either site at full speed with reliability in the storage and we know we can depend on BlueArc to deliver this.”

Why is it so important for Beam’s primary and secondary sites to be interchangeable and capable of delivering equal performance? “Because it’s an internet-accessible tool and people will be accessing it from anywhere in the world,” Smallwood explains. “We’ll be up and running at full capacity 24/7, 365 days a year. If we have a network outage, or if we are doing maintenance, it is vital to be in a position to failover to a completely reliable and equally performing secondary site.”

In addition to reliability, one of the other crucial factors for Beam was scalability. “The model for this was to keep the media uploaded online for long periods of time and continue to add disks to increase the archive size,” Smallwood said.

“All the media that’s ever been uploaded is always available online at Beam and our archive continues to grow, it’s a constantly evolving storage environment. As the BlueArc system is a consistent platform, adding new storage is straightforward and bringing new drives online is very transparent. So it’s great.”

The other major advantage of scaling up with the BlueArc Mercury for secondary storage is that it enables Beam to store and access archived data on high performance, highly available disk storage. “We wanted to store it on a disk because it has to be instantly accessible at any time. Advertisers expect it to be available as and when they need it”.

The Results

The BlueArc Mercury was installed earlier this year and the process was seamless, alongside simplifying our system. We are very pleased with how the system has been working. Having the Mercury with the Titan enables us to work with our ideal configuration, with the two sites being interchangeable.

The Conclusion

Beam is not only a loyal and satisfied customer, so is its sister company, The Mill, which uses BlueArc network storage for high-performance applications such as 3-D modeling, visual effects and rendering. “The performance of that system was very influential in us continuing down the path of using BlueArc,” Smallwood says. “It’s proven itself there and it has always been stable. The main consideration for Beam was the reliability and the ease of expansion.” As Beam looks to the future it will probably take advantage of some of the more advanced tools offered by BlueArc, such as intelligent tiering and mirroring. With BlueArc storage solutions, Beam customers can always be assured that Beam is providing them with the state-of-the art in addressing all of their most demanding challenges to deliver, play, change and store their vital digital commercial content anywhere in the world.

For more information

- www.bluearc.com
- www.beam.tv



BlueArc Corporation
Corporate Headquarters
50 Rio Robles
San Jose, CA 95134
t 408 576 6600
f 408 576 6601
www.bluearc.com

BlueArc UK Ltd.
European Headquarters
Queensgate House
Cookham Road
Bracknell RG12 1RB, United Kingdom
t +44 (0) 1344 408 200
f +44 (0) 1344 408 202