



Cobra Creative: Digital Agency Discovers Creative Solution for its Data Storage Needs with DroboElite (B800i)

San Francisco-based Cobra Creative is a boutique agency specializing in Internet marketing strategy and design, motion graphics, and websites. The firm works with many well-known companies such as NFL Networks, Verizon, Clif Bar, and Autodesk to create compelling social experiences that merge broadcast and interactivity in entertaining ways.

“I’m an art director, not a network storage expert. The best thing about the DroboElite (now available as the Drobo B800i) is the simplicity of it. It’s basically plug and play. I don’t have to worry about any of the technical issues that those other solutions have. I’ve activated the administrative alert feature that sends me an email when we’re running out of room. And because it’s connected directly to the Mac mini server with a static IP address, I can even manage it remotely from home ...” Jason Csizmadi, Senior Art Director

Challenge: Capacity and Throughput

In the course of their work, Cobra’s motion and interactive designers create huge data files. To store and provide designers with access to these files, the firm had purchased two first-generation Drobo storage devices in late 2007. These were connected over FireWire to an old Apple G4 running HornWare: SharePoints as a central file server.

This setup worked for a while, but by late 2009, rapid growth was threatening to max out the capacity of the two Drobo units. An even greater concern was the throughput over the network. High-resolution video files could be as large as 4 to 5 Gigabits, bringing the network to a standstill whenever a motion designer downloaded a file.

Jason Csizmadi, Senior Art Director, who is also responsible for Cobra’s networking infrastructure, began researching a storage solution that would deliver the scalability and performance the firm needed.

Solution: Simple and Fast DroboElite

Cobra Creative learned of the DroboElite, a cost-effective, simple-to-manage solution that met both capacity and data transfer requirements for Cobra. It could hold up to eight disks, as much as 16 terabytes. Adding capacity was as simple as inserting a new hard drive on the fly into an empty bay or swapping out a smaller drive for a larger one. And it provided two iSCSI interfaces for fast data transfers—even for large video files. “The first Drobos were so easy to set up. We figured the DroboElite would be just as easy,” says Csizmadi.

QUICK FACTS

Challenge

- Insufficient bandwidth to access stored data
- Maxed-out storage
- Looking for storage that’s easy-to-manage
- Drive failure protection

Solution

- DroboElite Storage Solution (Drobo B800i)

Benefits

- Set-and-forget simplicity
- Instant expandability with BeyondRAID™
- Dual high-performance iSCSI ports
- Single-or dual-drive redundancy
- Self-healing capabilities

More About the Solution

Before Csizjadi chose a Drobo, under consideration was a high-end, standalone system dedicated to the motion designers. "I looked at RAID and NAS drives. The products out there were all very technical. . . . I didn't want to have to set up and manage a complicated RAID configuration or deal with lost data due to a failed drive. That scared me."

Installation was a snap. "As soon as I got it, I connected it to the Mac mini server in no time at all with absolutely no problems," recalls Csizjadi. "We purchased a couple of 2-terabyte drives and plugged them in. Then I plugged in some old drives just to see how it worked." DroboElite supports any 3.5" SATA drives from any supplier, which can cost as little as one-fifth as much as proprietary drives.

For extra protection, Csizjadi repurposed the older Drobo units for data backup, running a program called ChronoSync automatically at midnight each night.

The productivity of Cobra Creative's staff is no longer hindered by a constrained network. "Our motion designers render right off the server at the same time our Web and design people are accessing files and we haven't had any performance problems," says Csizjadi.

DroboElite's self-managing, self-healing architecture eliminates nearly all routine management tasks for Csizjadi. "I'm an art director, not a network storage expert. The best thing about the DroboElite is the simplicity of it. It's basically plug and play. I don't have to worry about any of the technical issues that those other solutions have. I've activated the administrative alert feature that sends me an email when we're running out of room. And because it's connected directly to the Mac mini server with a static IP address, I can even manage it remotely from home."

DroboElite has given Csizjadi peace of mind. "If one of the drives fails, it will alert me. Plus, it will move the data to another drive. I'm not worried about losing data." DroboElite even has the ability to protect against data loss due to the simultaneous failure of two drives with a dual-drive redundancy feature.

More Information

Great information on the solutions described here and many others can be found @ www.drobo.com/solutions.

To learn more about how Drobo solutions can help you, ask your preferred reseller or visit:

www.drobo.com/where-to-buy.

To learn more about the Drobo B800i, visit: www.drobo.com/products/business/b800i/index.php.

For an iSCSI SAN solution with greater capacity, learn more about the Drobo B1200i, visit:

www.drobo.com/products/business/b1200i/index.php.