



Sid Lee Creates Efficient Multi-site Workflow

Sid Lee is a creative services firm with 550 professionals working globally across offices in Montreal, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, Paris and Amsterdam. The company creates transformative consumer experiences for brands – across all contact points – leveraging true interdisciplinary collaboration.

Sid Lee recently implemented the new EditShare XStream EFS platform in its main office and XStream ST storage servers in each of its regional offices, facilitating multi-site access to its growing library of media assets. In addition to the integrated Flow media asset management component, the installation featured the latest AirFlow remote collaboration toolset, creating a private cloud to securely facilitate media sharing and collaboration between Sid Lee production sites in Montreal, Toronto, New York and Amsterdam.

Nicolas Forest joined Sid Lee as a technical director in 2010. With close to 15 years of experience in post-production, he has built many editing environments globally. We caught up with Nicolas to talk about his experience with EditShare and the recent infrastructure upgrade to XStream EFS, XStream ST and Flow that will keep Sid Lee on the progressive edge.

Sid Lee conducts post-editing work in its offices all around the world. To efficiently manage any given project, we need access to all of our resources (both human and technical), regardless of geographic location. In 2015, we expanded our post-production infrastructure, taking collaboration across offices to a whole new level.

After evaluating many solutions, we finally chose EditShare XStream EFS as the main storage server

located in our Montreal office, and XStream ST shared storage servers for each of our remote offices; Amsterdam, Toronto, New York and Paris. We also added Flow media asset management to better control files between offices. Having collaborated with EditShare since 2011 with an earlier version of the XStream shared storage server, we knew they would understand our challenges and collaborate with us to make our vision come true.

New Storage Architecture

The XStream EFS storage solution we put into the Montreal office is a relatively new solution from EditShare, and its forward-thinking architecture brings us many advantages. First, it's a strong and secure way to store our files. The EFS node system combined with a good backup workflow gives Sid Lee the protection that we need in case of disaster. Second, it's a better way to manage media spaces. The single namespace file system gives us a complete overview of our media, which allows us to manage the entire storage environment more efficiently. But it's the system's high availability (dual master controllers – Active/Passive mode) capabilities that is key for our production needs. If one controller fails, the other one takes over. With this configuration, we can also manually switch from one controller to another for maintenance purposes. We lose zero production time in either scenario.



In the Montreal office, we have four editing workstations that are a mix of Media Composer, Adobe and Blackmagic DaVinci Resolve editors connected to the EFS server. We also have two motion design workstations equipped with After Effects and Cinema 4D attached to the storage. Because there is no per-seat license rule, we have the flexibility to add another editor or compositor to the EFS pool at will, which is incredibly convenient when we have a high volume of work that needs to get done.

The XStream EFS also give us more bandwidth. We can edit and color grade on RED 4K footage over a 10 GB Ethernet connection in real time. The performance is so good, we can even have a complex transcoding and backup job running, even add a freelancer to the pool, all without affecting the work done in the edit room.

Each remote office connects its editor of choice to the XStream ST server and uses the EditShare sync tool to sync the remote ST media space back to the Montreal EFS server on a daily basis. Since all of our offices have a private VPN, we can reach any server anywhere in our environment. The new set up really opens up content sharing across locations.

Better Control Over Assets

With Flow media asset management in our post-production arsenal, we can better manage assets across all offices and improve efficiency with the way we handle these assets, from point of ingest all the way to archive.

Our worldwide production infrastructure needs to be able to accommodate material shot on anything from an iPhone on up to a Sony F65 or Red Dragon 6K. This is a wide range of formats that was a headache in terms of ingest and transcode prior to the upgrade. Now, with Flow's file ingest capabilities, we are able to move the transcode process from our NLE workstations to the EditShare server, freeing up the editing workstation for client work.

Flow also allows us to better manage specific files. Metadata added to the master clip carries over to the transcoded clip, keeping a connection between the original and transcoded files. On the archive side, Flow can be used to restore only what we really need instead of restoring a whole media space. It's incredibly efficient. We gain back both time and storage space.



True Remote Collaboration

With EditShare's AirFlow component (private cloud), staff can connect to any remote office server via a web-based browser, look at the footage and download it locally for production, and vice versa. This is a workflow we are currently piloting and if all goes according to plan, it will really bring our collaboration on editorial work to a whole new level. For example, as soon as the file is on the EditShare server, the director in New York – using an iPad – can review the footage, add markers and make comments. An assistant editor in the Montreal office can then be assigned to prepare the session and use AirFlow to push the material to a resource in the Amsterdam remote office for further editing or color grading. This would mean no more shipping drives and no delay in footage.

AirFlow will also help drive efficiency in other ways. At times Sid Lee will have a big campaign that the Amsterdam office, New York office and Montreal office work on simultaneously. While each may be working on different mandate, they often use the same footage. Prior to the upgrade, we had to ship drives between offices. This was expensive and time consuming. With AirFlow we can select only the footage we need and download either a proxy of this footage for our offline edit, or the original file for our online edit. It really brings the collaboration to the next level.

Our Mantra is Forward

Sid Lee is a progressive company. We are always trying to find new ways to make production as efficient as possible. EditShare is listening to its customers' needs. They listen to our needs and are able to build new systems around them, and we really appreciate this attention. They are one of the few vendors that will come to us and ask, "We're thinking of developing this, what do you think if we go in this direction, would you find this useful to answer your needs?" They are more than a developer. They are a technology partner, and that's exactly what Sid Lee was looking for to achieve its goals.

