

## Case study

# Walking the Dog scales to meet new challenge



## HP workstations are the driver behind special effects and animation creation

### Industry

Creative Arts

### Objective

Walking the Dog needed to double the size of its workstation fleet in order to meet the demands of a new €25m film production

### Approach

Walking the Dog invested in 60 HP Z620 Workstations to complement its existing 60 HP Z600 Workstations

### IT matters

- The HP workstations are reliable, with only one system fault reported in over three years
- Practically noiseless operation, thanks to the SSD drive, makes for a more pleasant work environment
- Extensibility makes the workstations more flexible than the competition

### Business matters

- Walking the Dog can quickly and easily scale its workstation fleet to accommodate new employees
- The workstations are more cost-competitive than rival offerings
- By using older workstations for less performance intensive tasks such as matte painting, Walking the Dog gets at least five productive years from each device



**“It’s critical that we can scale the company quickly to meet the demands of a new production. The HP workstations give us the firepower we need for this in a robust and flexible manner.”**

– Eric Goossens, founder, Walking the Dog

### Walking the Dog has doubled its fleet of HP workstations to handle new feature film

In order to cope with the demands of an ambitious new film project, Walking the Dog has invested in 60 HP Z620 Workstations to complement its existing 60 Z600 Workstations. These help it create special effects, 3D animation, compositing and other studio tasks. It also relies on HP ProLiant Blade Servers to undertake 24/7 rendering.





## Challenge

### A leader in European animation

Since 1999, Walking the Dog has been creating cutting edge animation from its Belgian headquarters, including Oscar-nominated features such as the Triplets of Belleville and The Secret of Kells. It employs up to 150 people in its Brussels office who specialise in delivering special effects, 3D animation, compositing, rendering and traditional line-drawn animation.

Walking the Dog hires freelance directors, graphic designers and animators to meet the needs of each project, expanding and contracting staff as necessary. In late 2009, the studio needed to add over 60 freelancers to work on its latest feature, 'A Monster in Paris'. Each would require access to a high-powered workstation to carry out their processor-intensive work.

"We had five IBM workstations but with the expansion wanted to evaluate other options on the market. From a price-performance standpoint, HP was a clear leader," explains Jérôme Dubacq, IT manager, Walking the Dog. "We purchased 60 Z600 Workstations equipped with HP DreamColor and widescreen LCD displays to create and refine lighting and special effects, and to perform image touch-up."

When, in 2012, the company came to work on its most ambitious project yet, an animated fable with a €25m budget called 'Jack and the Cuckoo Clock Heart', it realised it would have to expand even further to handle the requisite work. This meant doubling the size of its existing fleet of workstations.

"We need to be able to scale up very quickly to cope with new projects. Having already experienced the quality of the HP workstations, it was the natural choice for this new project," adds Eric Goossens, founder, Walking the Dog.

## Solution

### Scaling up to the challenge

Walking the Dog invested in a further 60 HP Z620 Workstations to support the production of 'Jack and the Cuckoo Clock Heart'. The HP Z620 Workstation has three times the memory capacity of the previous generation, and with up to 24 discrete processor cores, it delivers significant computing and visualisation power in a quiet, compact footprint. As such, it is ideal for handling the graphically intensive applications on which Walking the Dog relies, such as Maya, Nuke and Modo.

## Customer solution at a glance

### Application

Traditional and computer graphics imagery and animation, animation rendering, tiered digital asset storage and access

### Hardware

- 60 HP Z620 Workstations
- 47 HP Z600 Workstations
- 1 HP Z800 Workstation
- 3 HP xw8x00 Workstations
- 64 HP ProLiant BL2x220c Servers
- 8 HP ProLiant BL460C Servers
- 8 HP ProLiant BL460C Servers
- 40 HP DreamColor Monitors and 40 \* ZR2440
- 40 \* LP2475W



“The new model gives us faster CPUs and heaps more RAM which makes our staff more productive. Put simply, we can work faster using these machines,” continues Jérôme. “We now use the latest model for the most intensive jobs, while we can switch the older Z600 devices to less demanding work such as matte painting. This enables us to get up to five years’ service from each workstation, rather than the usual three.”

In addition, the company uses HP ProLiant Blade Servers to handle rendering. The studio’s render farm consists of three HP BladeSystem c7000 Enclosures equipped with 64 HP ProLiant BL2x220c G6 Server Blades, each with two Intel® Xeon® quad-core processors, and 16 BL460c G6-G7, each with two Intel® Xeon® hexa-core processors, for a total of 160 CPUs. The studio’s ProLiant render farm runs 24x7, supporting iterative test rendering, and enabling animators to judge the impact of changes in scene lighting, textures, and images.

## Benefits

### Reliable, real-time production

Walking the Dog relies on HP to help it deliver its world class effects and animation work at cost-effective prices. Using the HP Z620 Workstation has enabled the company to tackle its latest, most complex production in confidence.

“The workstations are whisper quiet and incredibly reliable – in three years, we have had only one system failure and three drive failures and HP is quick to respond to any issues,” says Jérôme Dubacq. “Our users can work in real-time making the process of creating elaborate and detailed moving images more effective.”

Having recently opened a new office in Flanders, Walking the Dog has its sights set firmly on the future and it is convinced that HP workstations will continue to power its development.

“HP is at the heart of our business. Not just the workstations but also the storage and blade server infrastructure,” concludes Eric Goossens. “It gives us the ability to compete in a very aggressive market and deliver award-winning results.”

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