Case study

Vancouver Film School

Professional production education starts with HP Z Workstations

Industry
Higher education
Media & Entertainment

Objective
Provide professional technology platform for production-oriented film and entertainment industry education

Approach
Vancouver Film School has standardized on HP Z Workstations as the standard platform for all 13 of its educational programs

IT matters
• Professional quality workstations enable 24/7 use with high reliability

• Standardization enables flexible deployment to accommodate changing program needs, along with a single, all-encompassing software image that supports all academic programs

Business matters
• HP Z Workstations enable productive work on collaborative student projects without interruption or delays

• Leasing through HP Financial Services maximizes budget dollars while helping to ensure regular technology refresh

• Continuing HP relationship provides VFS with technical support, trusted expertise and insight for future technology planning

VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL
Results Matter

HP recommends Windows.

"We need the best technologies to make sure that students can produce industry-quality work. That's why we chose HP Z Workstations. It's all about making sure that Vancouver Film School offers an education that can change people's lives."

— Marty Hasselbach, Managing Director, Vancouver Film School

Vancouver Film School (VFS) is a premier entertainment arts school in Canada. The one-year, production-focused programs at VFS encompass all aspects of visual media. VFS proudly proclaims itself the "studio that teaches," where students immerse themselves in production. And all that production takes place on HP Z Workstations and Z Displays, the same tools that industry professionals use.

HP recommends Windows.

Vancouver Film School was founded on the philosophy of combining one year of concentrated production work with industry-led theory. Understanding the VFS intensity and structure, students come to hit the ground running from day one. The school offers 13 highly focused, career-oriented programs, from 3D Animation & Visual Effects to Digital Design, Film Production, and Programming for Games Web & Mobile, among others.

"If you're interested in getting into these fields, we feel VFS is the fastest, most effective, life-changing route to doing that," asserts Marty Hasselbach, managing director at the school.

Each program has a specific career goal. Based on that goal, VFS teaches students the appropriate base of knowledge and skills, sequencing them to build over the course of a year toward an industry-quality skill set leading to immediate employment.

Click image to view VFS video

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The results are difficult to argue with. VFS alumni work at many of the leading film, gaming and entertainment media companies. In 2013, VFS graduates worked on films earning 50% of the total world movie box office. To date, alumni have worked on 27 of the 30 top-grossing films of all time.

"We feel that achievements like these separate VFS from other schools," Hasselbach says.

Production education requires professional technology

In a single year at VFS, students create a professional-quality film, reel, or portfolio that demonstrates their abilities and talent. The most important ingredient, of course, is the students' creativity. But converting creativity to finished productions requires powerful technology, which VFS supplies through a wide range of industry partnerships.

"We rely heavily on technology and depend on our relationships with our industry partners," Hasselbach explains.

Those partnerships include industry-leading software vendors such as Adobe®, Autodesk® and Avid®, among others. For hardware, VFS has chosen just a single partner: HP.

"We've been with HP for over 12 years now, and the support has been phenomenal," says Hasselbach. "It's really important to use technology we can rely on, that is fast, reliable, and that we can count on day after day. We're open 24/7 and we need things to work."

Standardizing for power, flexibility

When the school recently refreshed its fleet of 775 student workstations, VFS standardized on HP Z400 series Workstations with AMD Firepro™ Professional Graphics cards. The school chooses to standardize on a single platform because, with over 1200 students in 13 different programs, VFS needs the flexibility to move workstations around to support different programs, different students, and to run different software suites, each time courses restart.

"Our IT team just loves the HP platform," Hasselbach says. "They really like the fact that with a standard HP Workstation, they can move around computers and easily change out components if necessary. Ultimately it's much, much easier for them to work on a single platform that's capable of supporting all our programs."

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In addition, VFS needs a hardware platform that is certified by all its major software

HP recommends Windows.

partners to run its software reliably and deliver professional performance—like HP Z Workstations.

The AMD FirePro graphics card gives VFS a "one size fits all" graphics solution, Hasselbach says. "We have all these different disciplines—game design, 3D animation, film editing, and so on. All these require different things from a graphics card, and the AMD FirePro card supports them all beautifully."

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VFS leases its entire fleet of HP Workstations through HP Financial Services, enabling it to manage the cost as an ongoing monthly expense, and to implement a three-year refresh cycle.

Non-stop learning requires reliable technology

The VFS strategy of packing a production-oriented education into a single year means there isn't a moment to waste. Students receive highly intensive instruction, then apply what they've learned in collaborative production projects.

So Hasselbach says VFS endeavors to deliver technology performance that actually exceeds what its students may encounter after graduation.

"VFS is one year of intensive work with long, long days. It's important we have technology that's ahead of the curve," Hasselbach explains. "If you're a student and you're working 16 or 18 hours a day, you want to make sure you're not sitting there waiting for the technology to catch up with your creative ideas. That's why we have HP Z Workstations in place."

He says students and staff love working on the new HP Z Workstations because processing and rendering times "are significantly faster than anything we've ever had before."

Learning, working alongside industry professionals

VFS' location in downtown Vancouver, Canada, is no accident. The school has centered its teaching and production facilities in a downtown district that is becoming a world hub for film and television productions, visual effects studios, and game developers. VFS has an ongoing relationship with local industry leaders through curriculum consultation, expert instructors and discipline-specific mentorships.

The school's newest facility is a Film Production and Animation & Visual Effects campus, the largest dedicated film and animation teaching center in Canada with some 115,000 square feet. The film campus features nine independent shooting studios,

Customer at a glance

Application
Desktop technology for production-oriented film and entertainment industry education

Hardware
- HP Z400 Workstations
- HP DreamColor LP2480zx Professional Display
- AMD FirePro™ Professional Graphics Cards

Software
- Adobe® Creative Suite® Production Premium
- Autodesk® Maya®, Houdini, Flame®
- Avid® Media Composer
- Native Instruments
- Perforce
- Pixologic
- The Foundry

HP services
- HP Financial Services

HP recommends Windows.

a 280-degree green screen studio, multiple screening theatres, a full props department, a complete and contemporary film production resource inventory, and an ultra-high-speed fiber network supporting HP Workstations.

"In our new film campus we've installed six online Avid suites, all running on the HP Z Workstation platform," Hasselbach says. "We're also using the incredibly innovative HP DreamColor monitor, which is really important for being able to do high-quality digital color correction."

Developed in close collaboration with DreamWorks Animation, the HP DreamColor LP2480zx Professional Display uses both a true 30- bit panel and an RGB LED backlight, providing over one billion possible colors and an extremely wide color gamut. The built-in HP DreamColor color management engine ensures that the display provides accurate color within industry standard gamuts.

Extending to meet future needs

Managing VFS in Vancouver is more than enough to keep Hasselbach busy. But the school has also added a second campus in Shanghai, China. It is a joint venture between the government of Shanghai, Shanghai University, and VFS. Its mission: to supply graduates who can make Shanghai the leading film and entertainment production center in Asia.

"Our Shanghai campus is different in the sense that the goal there is to immediately create a talent pool to grow the film and entertainment industry in that region," Hasselbach says. "Here in Vancouver, we have traditionally drawn students from all over the world and support the industry worldwide."

But the industry itself is changing, and that affects opportunities for graduates. "Distribution is going to change the way products are being made," he continues. "Technology and increased bandwidth are

creating opportunities for people to do things without having to be in any specific place. So geography is less and less important."

While most VFS graduates have focused on employment with large studios, movies and gaming companies, there is more room than ever for independently created projects. "So there's more of an entrepreneurial element today, and our program reflects that," Hasselbach says.

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VFS remains focused on offering the best facilities and technology, the best education, and the best outcomes, Hasselbach says.

"Vancouver Film School is an amazing place," he notes. "It's the sum of many parts: an amazing curriculum, fantastic and passionate faculty, some of the best students from all over the world. And of course we need the best technologies to make sure that those students can produce industry-quality work. That's why we chose HP Z Workstations. It's all about making sure that Vancouver Film School offers an education that can change people's lives."

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