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Howard Arnault-Ham
Head of IT for Aardman Animations

About Aardman Animations

Aardman Animation has a thriving CGI department and has produced Oscar®-winning films, T.V. commercials, and even music videos, such as Peter Gabriel's Sledgehammer.

The company, based in Bristol (UK) and co-founded and run by Peter Lord and David Sproxton, is a world leader in animation. It produces feature films, television series and television commercials for both the domestic and international market.

Their multi-award winning productions are novel, entertaining, brilliantly characterized and full of charm that reflects the unique talent, energy and personal commitment of the very special people who make up the Aardman team.

Challenge

Aardman Animations needed a comprehensive network management solution to provide visibility into the performance of its internal network infrastructure. Further, the IT team needed to quickly diagnose and resolve network and application issues before they had a serious impact on the creative team and other users.

Aardman's IT network is spread across four sites in Bristol, England, supporting 250 users. Its 10Mbit/s extended LAN supports a wide variety of complex creative applications such as CGI, Internet traffic ranging from Web sites and bandwidth-intensive graphics to file servers and database replications.

Solution

Aardman deployed Network Instruments' Observer® technology for proactive problem resolution and efficient monitoring across its extended local area network (LAN).

Aardman purchased Network Instruments® Observer 12 from Abingdon-based Open Reality, and worked closely with their technical consultants in the testing phase to ensure everything went smoothly.

"Aardman is a unique organisation and, upon careful review of their network needs, we determined Observer to be the best solution for combining management reporting with diagnosis and resolution tools," said Duncan Little, CEO of Open Reality. "This is absolutely critical for Aardman, as they run so many bandwidth-intensive and network critical applications."

Observer: Broad, Yet Affordable

"We reviewed the best network management tools on the market, but no other vendor could touch Network Instruments Observer software for its combination of breadth of functionality and affordability," said Howard Arnault-Ham, Head of IT for Aardman Animations.

"We have an incredible volume of bandwidth-intensive applications shared across a complex environment. We needed a solution that could handle our systems. Having used Observer in my previous employment, I knew it was user-friendly and extremely reliable and therefore had no hesitation in recommending it to the management team."

Looking Ahead

Aardman is looking to expand its network to support new technologies such as VoIP, and as part of this expansion plans to install Network Instruments' hardware probes. These will give IT the ability to monitor multiple

links simultaneously from the Observer console for distributed visibility across the network. "Observer not only helps Aardman resolve issues happening today, but will help guard against network failures in the long run," said Ian Cummins, European Sales Director, Network Instruments.

"Observer helps segment network and application issues so they can get a handle on both. Long-term data acquisition and log-in facilities will help establish baselines for normal operation. As Aardman is a growing organisation, this will help the IT department justify capacity upgrades and pre-empt issues that may arise in the future."



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