

"A Beka Academy" Keeps Video Library Organized with the Sony HDXchange System.

CASE STUDY



Customer:

- Pensacola Christian College's "A Beka Academy"

Industry:

- Education

Challenges:

- Create an ongoing archive of recorded classroom lessons to easily share with students, faculty and other schools
- Efficiently manage and distribute video content for simultaneous review and editing by multiple parties

Solution:

- Implement a solution comprising Sony's Media Backbone™ HDXchange™ networked content management system, PetaSite™ content management library system and XDCAM® HD optical disc system

Benefits:

- The school's production and editing workflows are now based on a scalable and easy-to-manage file-based system
- Recorded instructional content is easily shared, reviewed, edited and distributed to customers in a more timely fashion
- Turnaround time for producing finished content is reduced from months to just days
- The school's library of recorded content is archived in a more secure and accessible system



Recording hours of video during each school day for several decades can result in a massive library of mixed legacy footage. At Pensacola Christian College's "A Beka Academy," the goal of capturing all this footage is to have an ongoing archive of classroom lessons to easily share with its kindergarten through 12th grade home school students and with other schools. But for Greg Moses, the school's TV and DVD productions director, efficiently managing and distributing all this video is a challenge.

The Academy's mission is to give young people a quality traditional education from a Christian perspective. The school has been in existence for 50 years, and started recording lessons in the early 80's.

"All the instructional material presented live in the classrooms every day is recorded," Moses said. "We produce DVD, Web and streaming content for students at other Christian schools or home-school students to use, so they can watch and study right along with our students, using the same curriculum and materials."

The Academy distributes content to more than 43,000 home-school customers, as well as several hundred schools.

"Our recording started on U-matic, moved to DVCAM™ and now we use the XDCAM optical disc system," he said. "We needed to move our production and editing into a more scalable and easy-to-manage file-based system."

The technology that the Academy chose was Sony's Media Backbone HDXchange

networked content management system, working together with Sony's PetaSite content management library system.

"It's allowed us to maintain our daily library of instructional content in a way that we can easily access it and get it to our customers in a more timely fashion," Moses said. "We converted everything to AVI files that are stored in the PetaSite system, and all those files are available through the HDXchange system. We're always recording, revising or correcting something, so the HDXchange system is a perfect match for how we need to work."

One of the system's main benefits is that it provides simultaneous access to content by multiple parties. Also, the academy's faculty and production teams are impressed with the HDXchange system's auto-ingest functionality, improving the ingest process, placing material where it needs to go and making it available to everyone who needs to use it.

The system also allows operators to add clip- and timecode-based metadata, even as material is coming into the system, which allows them to more easily identify and jump to key points in the video.

"If we need to find a piece of legacy footage, I can go into the archive on the PetaSite system, search for it and do what we need to it through the HDXchange system," Moses said.

"We just love it," he added. "It gives us fast and easy access to all our work." The system has reduced the Academy's turnaround time for producing finished content from months to just days.

"In the past, teachers would have to go back to the classroom to review a tape," Moses said. "Now, they can watch it from their office or anywhere on campus that they can log into the system," he said. "It gives them a lot more flexibility and they can review a lesson more quickly."

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—Greg Moses, TV and DVD productions director, Pensacola Christian College’s “A Beka Academy”

Teachers and administrators now have access to the footage simultaneously. “They review the dailies for self-improvement and for accuracy of content,” he said. “Having several people review at the same time helps us put out a quality product in a shorter timeframe.

In a typical week, Monday’s video is ingested into the system on Monday afternoon, so by Tuesday morning the editors are working on Monday’s video. It’s edited, checked, and ready for distribution within a week’s time.

“Usually we’re running only about two days behind what’s being taught in the classroom,” he said.

That’s a dramatic difference from the Academy’s tape-based days.

“In the past, a lesson would get put on tape, edited, and would have to be duplicated,” Moses said. “We used VHS for years, and then DVDs, but they would have to go to a replicator who took our masters and encoded the content into the DVD format. Then they would send us back an approval DVD, which we’d check against the master to make sure it was correct before they would make 1,000 to 1,500 copies that would be shipped to customers.

“It was months before a customer would ever get our product,” he said. “Now, we have it ready for streaming in just a few days.”

The combination of the PetaSite and HDXchange systems helps in the event of lost or damaged footage.

“In a typical day, whatever’s ingested in an afternoon is edited the next morning, and it gets posted to the various places it needs to go,” Moses said. “The PetaSite system is scheduled every night at midnight for back-ups, so it automatically backs up everything and then we can move that content off the HDXchange system to make room for the next day’s content, and do it very quickly.”

Recently, a partner in the distribution chain for the Academy’s streaming content updated something in their system and lost several original files. “With this technology, rather than having to re-render the files, we just restored them from the H.264 version that are also archived on the PetaSite system and re-posted them. That saved us a tremendous amount of time.”

Looking ahead, Moses is confident that the HDXchange and PetaSite technologies can grow with the school as its video production needs increase.

“We expanded the HDXchange system with an additional 48 TB of Network Attached Storage, and we can do that again easily if necessary,” he said. “It’s very flexible, you can scale it to meet your needs and find creative solutions that will help you store and keep your data and have it available when you need it.”