

CASE
STUDY

Framestore centrally deploys high-performance workstations to a global user base with Leostream

LEOSTREAM PROVIDES FRAMEWORK FOR UNIFYING A LARGE-SCALE DEPLOYMENT OF HOSTED RESOURCES TO 2,500+ ANIMATION AND VISUAL EFFECTS ARTISTS



As Europe's largest post-production house, Framestore is known for creating the highest quality images for animation and visual effects. Since 1986, the company has been a leading innovator across film, advertising, television, and immersive—collecting countless accolades along the way. The creative studio brings extraordinary ideas to life through craft, imagination and technology.

Framestore has been a longstanding customer of Leostream and recently expanded its use case to support a global, remote workforce. With over 2,500 artists across multiple locations, Framestore leverages the Leostream™ Platform to centralize the deployment of high-powered workstations.

Christophe Meslin, Global Head of Technical Resources, and Andrea Bonomelli, Systems Administrator, at Framestore played an integral role in implementing Leostream at scale across the organization.

Meslin and Bonomelli along with other key decision makers had many considerations for architecting the solution, including security, performance, price, etc. After contemplating building a solution in-house, they determined that the flexibility already provided by Leostream was exactly what

was needed to simplify administrative efforts and consolidate resources. “We took the opportunity to unify the system across the business and in every location,” said Meslin. “It was preferable to have everyone using one system instead of multiple. We wanted consistency.”

Having flexibility and the ability to customize the Leostream Platform to best suit the current and future needs for Framestore were critical aspects of the design. According to Bonomelli, “We did our due diligence with looking at the roadmap ahead. The flexibility that Leostream offers doesn't compare to anything.”

Leostream provides the framework to consolidate the hosted desktop environment at Framestore in order to address a number of business initiatives.

Delivering high-performance workstations in the office and remotely

Home to a collective of visionaries working across film, advertising, television and immersive, the artists at Framestore rely on high-performance machines for their creative work. Leostream integrates with a wide assortment of display protocols including Teradici PCoIP, which delivers a secure, high-

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Global Head of Technical Resources, Framestore

definition and highly responsive computing experience for pixel-perfect renderings. “Leostream has come into play easily, because we have Teradici connecting from the public Internet. There are no more VPNs and remote users can connect without hassle. Just click and be assigned a workstation through Leostream,” explained Bonomelli of the workflow.

Supporting a hybrid and geographically dispersed team

In an industry that has traditionally employed on-premises infrastructure, the pivot to remote work during the 2020 pandemic spurred the extension of Leostream to users company-wide. “We were tasked to deploy everybody in our five locations all at once,” summarized Meslin about rolling out Leostream across the visual effects side of the business at the onset of the pandemic. “It was a blitz. We were under huge pressure to make it happen in so very little time so that the business could continue to operate.”

With the Leostream Platform in place, the organization is now able to deliver workstations to a geographically dispersed team comprised of users working from home, at a project site, or in the office. To control access to resources, everyone is required to login to a workstation through Leostream regardless of their location. Not only does funneling all users through Leostream provide consistency, it makes it possible for IT to centrally manage the user base.

Maximizing resource utilization with desktop pools

In some situations, users are hard assigned individual desktops in a one to one fashion. In other scenarios, Framestore utilizes the desktop pooling feature available in Leostream to group workstations together so that resources can be shared. “The pooling component is very unique and we can tailor it to our needs,” explained Bonomelli. “For example, we have backup pools. So, if there’s an issue, our users can still grab a workstation from the backup pool.” This ensures that users can maintain productivity while IT staff resolves issues.

The organization has also been able to save money

using desktop pools to share applications. “We have a dedicated pool of Windows workstations for applications that are not day-to-day requirements, and we are definitely saving money on hardware and software,” said Bonomelli. “Since we are primarily Linux based, it makes sense to have users share Windows OS workstations.”

Prioritizing security and streamlining the auditing process

When working with major vendors like Warner Bros., Disney, Netflix, and Amazon Prime — which are just a few customers on the Framestore roster — content security is of utmost importance. Framestore has a multi-prong approach to securing intellectual property.

Ensuring only authorized users have access to content is a significant aspect of the security strategy. “No user has access to the vendor data without proper authorization and there’s no intellectual property residing on the end-point devices of our artists,” stated Meslin.

Framestore uses multi-factor authentication to provide an extra layer of security when users connect through the Leostream Platform. “With MFA in place, along with some other measures, we are 100% sure no one can connect unless they are authorized by us,” elaborates Bonomelli. Leostream offers integrations with a variety of MFA providers, including PingID, Duo, Okta, or any other Identity Provider (IdP) that supports SAML or the RADIUS protocol.

Framestore must also be prepared for annual audits from the Motion Picture Association (MPA) and the Trusted Partner Network (TPN). These two organizations govern security across all creative studios around the world. It’s important for Framestore to be able to provide detailed information showing who has access to creative content. This is where logs, courtesy of Leostream, become extremely helpful. The Leostream logs track insights regarding who logged into what resource and for how long, making it easy to monitor and report user activity for the purpose of an audit.

“In terms of time saved throughout the day, it’s been life saving.”

Christophe Meslin, Global Head of Technical Resources, Framestore

At the beginning of the pandemic, Framestore engaged with the MPA and TPN to review its remote access solution powered by Leostream and received positive remarks. “We got very good feedback from everyone on that matter and what we’ve done,” commented Meslin.

Simplifying administrative IT functions

The IT department at Framestore regularly evaluates new technology to improve efficiency so that technical efforts and budgeting can be allocated optimally. “We’re looking into ways for technology to reduce administrative tasks so that we can focus on supporting the creative side of things here at Framestore,” said Meslin.

Framestore has a large technical staff and close to 100 administrators for Leostream. The organization takes advantage of the roles feature within Leostream to define the levels of permissions available to various IT personnel — ranging from full control over modifying the system to limited control.

From both a user and IT perspective, Leostream has been well received. Bonomelli, who is recognized as the Leostream guru at Framestore, says, “I love the product.” Meslin shares that sentiment, particularly when it comes to efficiency, “In terms of time saved throughout the day, it’s been life saving.”

Framestore has Leostream Agents installed on each workstation, which provides IT staff with additional control and information about users’ sessions. “I like how the Leostream Agents integrate...that’s a good component. We don’t have to set up crazy queries or workflows,” explained Bonomelli.

Both IT professionals, Meslin and Bonomelli, appreciate the flexibility the platform affords and are already looking ahead at future use cases.

Looking ahead: hybrid working environment and cloud workstations

Throughout the pandemic, Framestore had artists working from home all over Europe and in several other locations around the globe. “In the past, we would have never thought this to be possible. For the business to see that the output is as good as when everyone was in the office and the quality has not gone down is really important,” recalled Meslin.

Seeing that remote work is possible has the creative studio rethinking options for deploying resources. Framestore is evaluating cloud-hosted workstations

and is excited that Leostream integrates with a range of cloud hosting platforms like Amazon, Google, and Azure. A major benefit of moving to the cloud is the ability to spin up new machines on demand and turn them off when they are no longer needed — which could all be managed from within the administrative dashboard in Leostream.

“We have an influx of work and due to computer manufacturer shortages, it’s been hard to get new staff the physical machines they need,” explained Meslin. Moving to the cloud opens up opportunity for hiring new talent across a broader geographical area and being able to onboard artists rapidly to meet demands for new content.

Ultimately, this type of flexibility and being able to try out new platforms and technologies is one of the main reasons Framestore chose to align with Leostream. “We were confident that it was better to go with Leostream because it evolves regularly. It’s not just about the price, but the whole package and it was the flexibility that the product offered. The support team does a great job. It’s a true partnership and they make sure we are using the product to its full potential,” concluded Bonomelli.

As a vendor neutral solution, Leostream is constantly adding new technology to its long list of integrators. The IT team at Framestore is assured that Leostream will assist with future initiatives as the company continues to advance.

About Leostream

Leostream provides the critical connection-broker technology required for institutions to achieve successful large-scale remote access, VDI, hosted desktop, or hosted application environments in both private and public clouds. The Leostream Connection Broker is the industry’s most widely deployed vendor-independent connection broker, enabling enterprises to integrate the complex array of clients, back-end systems and protocols required for successful hosted desktop and application deployments.

For sales inquiries or to request a free trial, email: sales@leostream.com