



OVERVIEW



Based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, SPLICE is a post-production studio offering a range of services, including visual effects (VFX), motion design, and color, for episodic television and independent films. Despite its relatively small size, SPLICE's 12-person VFX team works on some of today's biggest titles in television and streaming. Its portfolio includes *The Walking Dead*, *DC Legends of Tomorrow*, *Arrow*, *Daredevil*, *All American*, and *Once Upon a Time*. Although the shows and movies SPLICE supports reach national and international audiences, the market for VFX artists in Minneapolis is relatively small. As the company began anticipating growth, it sought to use the cloud to bring on artists from around the country to expand business and reach. Six Nines guided SPLICE through a proof of concept (POC) of virtual workstations and a render farm on Amazon Web Services (AWS), demonstrating SPLICE could make a virtually seamless transition to a hybrid cloud model.

CHALLENGES

Andrew Sagar, VFX Supervisor at SPLICE, said the company naturally gravitated toward the cloud because it wanted a way to increase flexibility. "We needed a way to expand our operations within our existing footprint," explained Sagar. "The pandemic only reinforced the potential advantages of letting our artists work wherever they want to... We just wanted to ensure that the cloud production environment could deliver the performance and security we needed." After carefully researching options, SPLICE was leaning toward using Teradici on AWS. Since the SPLICE team was new to cloud-based solutions, it turned to the AWS experts at Six Nines for guidance.

SOLUTION

After discussing the SPLICE team's technical requirements, Six Nines was confident that virtual workstations and a render farm on AWS would be a good fit. "The Six Nines team let us know that a cloud solution could provide an experience just like sitting at a normal workstation," said Sagar. "Since they had been through this many times, it was great to hear knowing that our monitors need to look pristine because we work with images seen on larger screens that need to be pixel-accurate." Once SPLICE decided to move forward, Six Nines set up the flex-to-cloud POC and guided the company through the ins and out of the virtual studio experience.

As part of the POC, Six Nines configured SPLICE's workstations and network environment in AWS on Amazon EC2 instances. Six Nines created the workstation environment using Teradici Cloud Access Plus along with the AWS Thinkbox Deadline client and submitter. The render farm also employs Thinkbox Deadline v10.x and incorporates AWS Service Limits for GPU and Spot instances. Six Nines also configured an on-prem server at SPLICE with Thinkbox Deadline and configured the AWS portal for burst rendering. "I was surprised about how quick everything happened," said Sagar. "We went from the initial startup of our POC to everything up and running in just a couple of weeks."

"I personally love the cloud-based workstations because I can now access my workstation anytime. Even when I need to travel somewhere to work on a set."

-Andrew Sagar, VFX Supervisor, SPLICE

AWS SERVICES USED

- Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2)
- Amazon Simple Storage Service (S3)
- Amazon Elastic File System (EFS)
- Amazon FSX for Lustre/FSX for Windows
- AWS Thinkbox Deadline
- AWS Systems Manager
- Amazon CloudWatch
- Amazon CloudTrail
- Amazon Virtual Private Cloud (VPC)

SIX NINES EXPERTISE

- Deep M&E Experience
- TPN/MPAA Security Standards
- DevOps
- Infrastructure as Code (IaC)
- Cloud Automation
- Cost Optimization & Governance

RESULTS

Overall, the SPLICE team was pleasantly surprised by the potential of the virtual studio environment. Sagar said he thought paintwork would be the most significant issue because it requires pixel accuracy and an ultra-realistic user experience. "If you have any lag between your user device and what's on screen, intricate paintwork becomes nearly impossible," he explained. "We were able to do intricate paint work flawlessly, just like with our own workstations." Although SPLICE hasn't used the virtual environment for production yet, an initial test showed promising results. The company reran a job that it had already completed for an independent feature, performing some compositing and simulation work, and was impressed with the results. "There are always a few gotchas with these things, but our test felt like we were using a local workstation... the performance was right where we needed it to be," said Sagar. Moving forward, SPLICE is excited about the expanded business possibilities in the cloud. "This not only allows our artists to work from wherever they want, but it removes the stresses, unexpected costs, and time suck of dealing with on-site hardware," he notes.

WHY SIX NINES?

Six Nines IT is an AWS Premier Consulting Partner and AWS Solution Provider specializing in helping businesses migrate to the cloud responsibly. A member of the AWS Partner Network since its inception, Six Nines has successfully migrated hundreds of customers across all industries to the cloud and offers an unparalleled combination of speed, agility, experience, and proprietary solutions to deliver accelerated solutions and a rapid time-to-value. The Oakland-based company combines old-school, on-premises IT roots together with deep expertise and a laser focus on all things AWS – including a core concentration on High Performance Computing, AI/ML, AWS Microsoft Workload Competency and AWS DevOps Competency – to deliver solutions that are individually tailored to meet customers' needs throughout the cloud lifecycle.



Premier
Consulting
Partner

DevOps Competency
Microsoft Workloads
Competency
Solution Provider

