



PSYOP CASE STUDY

AWS Cloud-Based Studio Psyop Gains Global Collaboration and Efficiency With Hammerspace's Global Data Environment



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Celebrating over two decades of exceptional artistry and groundbreaking work, Psyop continues to revolutionize the commercial production industry, blurring the lines between advertising and entertainment. Its work spans animation, live action, gaming trailers and world-building, as well as original content. Clients range from global brands such as Coach, Aldi, Coca-Cola, Hulu, Riot Games, Amazon, Google, and Supercell.

Through its collective and unparalleled passion for craft, Psyop attracts and inspires the best talent from all over the world, working seamlessly across teams, time zones, disciplines and technologies to create timeless stories and meaningful design across all platforms and mediums. Its directors and creative partners are based in New York, Los Angeles, London, Berlin, Paris, Copenhagen, Madrid, São Paulo, Spain, Buenos Aires, and Tokyo.



Eliminating Copy Sprawl and Speeding Global Collaboration With Hammerspace

When Craig Cesareo, now the company's CTO, first joined Psyop in 2018, the studio was splintered across several locations. Keeping files in sync was a constant pain point, particularly as the organization expanded talent internationally. "If anyone in Germany, for example, wanted to help other offices with projects, they had to remote into a machine in the U.S. and it was laggy for them. It just wasn't an enjoyable or efficient experience."

Prior to Hammerspace, Psyop had isolated WEKA clusters in two AWS regions - one in U.S. East, and one in Ireland. "It really wouldn't have been possible to continue delivering projects or expanding our business without Hammerspace," said Cesareo. "Having to copy the files back and forth to different WEKA clusters was time consuming, didn't enable real time artist collaboration,

and created inefficient and difficult to manage copy sprawl."

Pysop initially found Hammerspace working with its value-added reseller partner, [GPL Technologies](#). Founded in 2004, GPL designs IT solutions and data infrastructures for post-production facilities, VFX shops, feature film studios and game development houses worldwide.



Cesareo needed a solution for a single namespace for all of Psyop's creative content. "We have some studios that run out of other countries and they work on completely different projects. We need to leverage talent globally and it is not practical to spin up a new studio in each location. Even using a local AWS region is not efficient, as it requires that location to have isolated data and projects that other applications and talent in the company can't access easily. We really wanted that single workspace to work with people no matter where they are."

Designed to make data a global resource across distributed or otherwise incompatible storage platforms, Hammerspace provides a cross-platform parallel global file system where users not only have the benefit of global namespace, but users and applications can also have direct, multi-protocol access to all files regardless of which storage type, cloud vendor, or location they are in today or move to in the future.

Once granted appropriate permissions and access, users and applications connect to the Hammerspace namespace and can view, access, and modify data in any storage system and in any location without creating copies of data or involving IT to connect to each storage system.



"With Hammerspace, we could keep all studios in sync. We don't need to keep terabytes of data in all regions; we only really have to pull over the very specific files that are in use," said Cesareo. "Even for editorial work, where files are very large, we can pinpoint which folders need piping hot storage on both sites. It's opened the ability to collaborate around the world by just managing rules through software objectives."

"We don't have to worry about the data location, data placement, or escalating costs of multiple copies of content," he continued. "If we need to spin up another region to have another cluster, it's not something we have to worry about for added complexity and we can quickly populate that cluster as part of Hammerspace and have local metadata, representing all of our data, nearly immediately. This enables us to bring on new remote talent fast and efficiently."

Psyop's team leverages many of the popular software applications in the commercial video tech industry, including Autodesk's Maya and Flame, Adobe, Houdini, and Foundry's Nuke. "We run everything we can on Hammerspace," said Cesareo. "That includes the application data itself, everyone's home directories, user profiles and project data. We make it the hub for all the data that we can, so the resources are just bare bones, making it easier to spin up and destroy without having to worry about it."



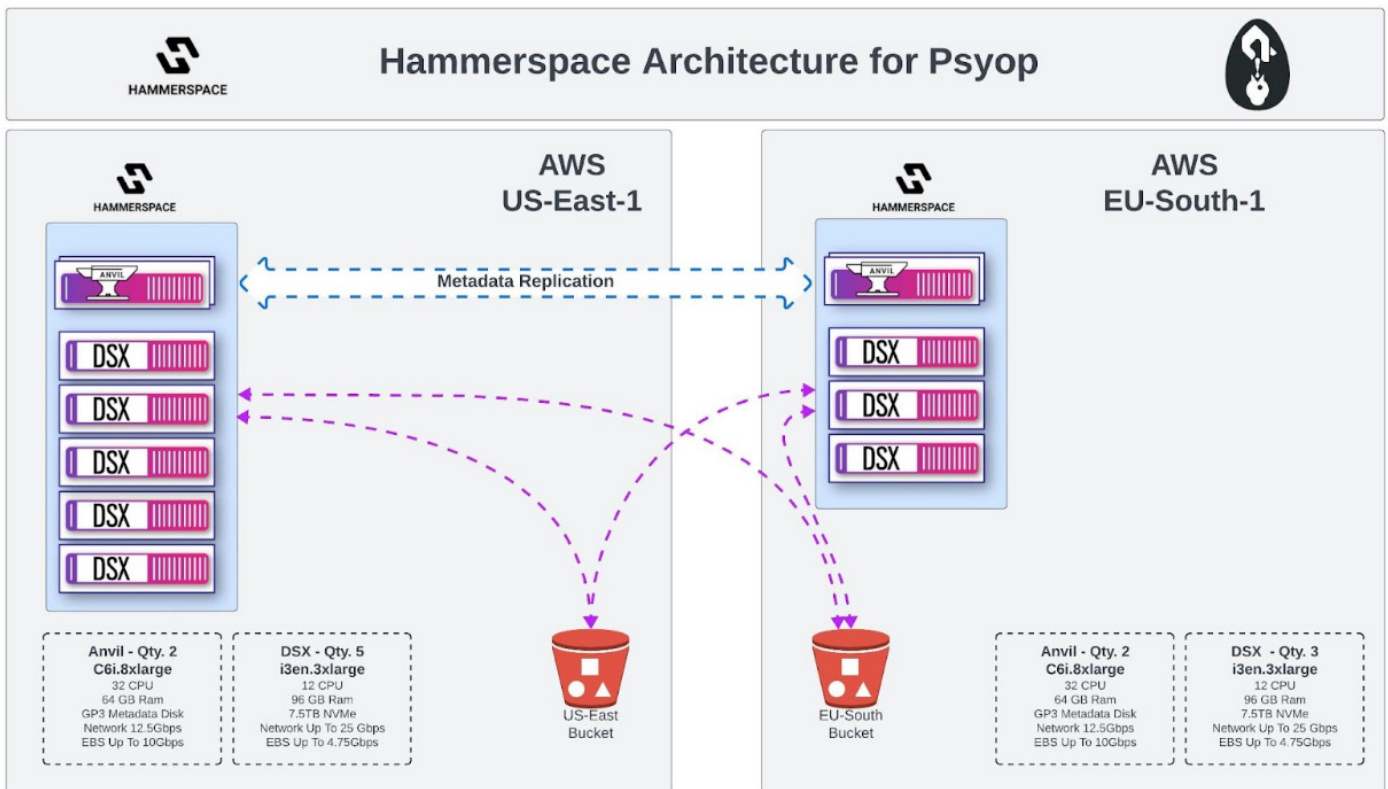


Figure 1: Live Collaboration and Automated Data Orchestration Across Studios

The AWS Cloud Keeps Costs Down While Scaling Resources Up

Notably, Psyop is a completely cloud-based studio with AWS. In 2020, the studio saw its commercial work expand, securing larger projects that required the team to scale both its freelance talent and render farm resources. “We sometimes outgrew what we could actually do in our studios,” explained Cesareo. “It was harder to have staff on-site working on projects.”

Then came the pandemic, which was the push for the studio to move everything - including its storage, computers and applications - to the AWS cloud. “We had talked about it beforehand but it wasn’t really a priority,” said Cesareo. “But once that happened, we just made the shift, took the opportunity, and started spinning up all the resources. In my opinion it’s far cheaper than running a studio and we’ve been able to save a lot of costs when scaling for those larger projects.”

“The resources are volatile at that point,” noted Cesareo. “You can tear them down, you can spin them back up, update them, there’s not any restrictions on the system side.”

Whether in the AWS cloud or an onsite data center, Hammerspace software can be installed on any combination of bare-metal servers, type-two hypervisors, and/or cloud instances, for maximum flexibility. Its Hyperscale NAS architecture can start very small at a single site and dynamically expand to support very high-performance use cases at one location, tiering to cost effective storage in another location, or grow to span the globe seamlessly across multiple on-prem and/or cloud-based data centers. No matter the deployment model, all data is unified in a single high-performance global file system, viewed and accessed through a global namespace, and data placement is automated with integrated data orchestration policies.



Psyop Finds Efficiencies, Savings with Hammerspace

Looking to the future, Cesareo noted that “Flame is probably the biggest change we’re going to make this year. I’ve been designing how I want our Hammerspace DSX setup to be, the balance between the EBS storage, NVMe, and what size machines have different workflows.”

When asked what is next, Cesareo is looking toward optimizing his Autodesk Flame applications as well as his archive strategy with Hammerspace. “We want our Autodesk Flame to be able to run with a global data set just like the rest of our applications are set up with Hammerspace today.”

Further, Cesareo noted that Psyop is also planning to “move to Hammerspace as our archive solution for fast writes and then move our Flame data store over sometime this year”.

“Having to actively manage files is just something we don’t have to do anymore,” noting that he used to write “a lot of custom scripts to manage our data, and we don’t need them anymore.”



For Psyop, the biggest metrics for success were “the amount of time and money (Hammerspace) saves our ENG/IO department.” said Cesareo. “Having to actively manage files is just something we don’t have to do anymore,” noting that he used to write “a lot of custom scripts to manage our data, and we don’t need them anymore.”

“We’ve saved a lot on storage too. We don’t need a large storage cluster in each location. We just need enough to host their small project data.”

Hammerspace’s technology and the studio’s move to the AWS cloud has enabled Psyop to transcend the conventions of visual storytelling. In its drive to endlessly reinvent, the studio continues to challenge the standard capabilities of any given language, medium or tool.





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