

Picture Desk Workflow Overload - Solving the High Volume Large File Transfer Dilemma



Introduction

Implementing a solution that enables companies to send and receive large files with relative ease is one thing, having the capacity to sustain unusually high volumes of incoming and outgoing traffic on a daily basis is a totally different matter altogether.

The Publisher's Picture Desk is a prime example of this kind of high volume environment. Receiving large volumes of the latest digital images, the ability to receive significant quantities of time sensitive data is a necessity for any Picture Desk. So is the key requirement to remove all manual intervention from the file transfer process by automatically forwarding this data into the Picture Desk Workflow.

Besides the fundamental need to receive large numbers of files into the Picture Desk, there are an assortment of sideline issues that can create significant problems in any workflow scenario if not addressed accordingly.

If you are planning to invest in a file delivery solution for your Picture Desk Workflow, you must ensure it addresses the following requirements so as not to impact negatively on business efficiency and profitability.

SIMPLICITY: Non-technical users struggle when dealing with complicated user interfaces such as traditional FTP, therefore not only do publisher's need to offer their customers a simple way of sending files into the picture desk but internal users with a simple interface for monitoring and reporting or to access files manually.

RELIABILITY: Publishers need to ensure that the stream of data entering the business remains uninterrupted as failed systems result in a backlog, or loss of time-sensitive image files.

MANAGEMENT: Inevitably when tasked with receiving large quantities of data, consideration should be taken for the management of the solution by internal IT infrastructure and systems. A high volume file transfer solution should provide, as a minimum, the automated deletion of files forwarded, notification options to Sys Admin's in the event of errors and the ability for integration into infrastructure monitoring systems, for example using SNMP.

AUDITING: For the sake of reliability, efficiency and compliance, it is necessary to keep a centralised log or audit trail of all files that have been received into and delivered out of the Picture Desk. Simple access to and backing up of the logs should also be possible.

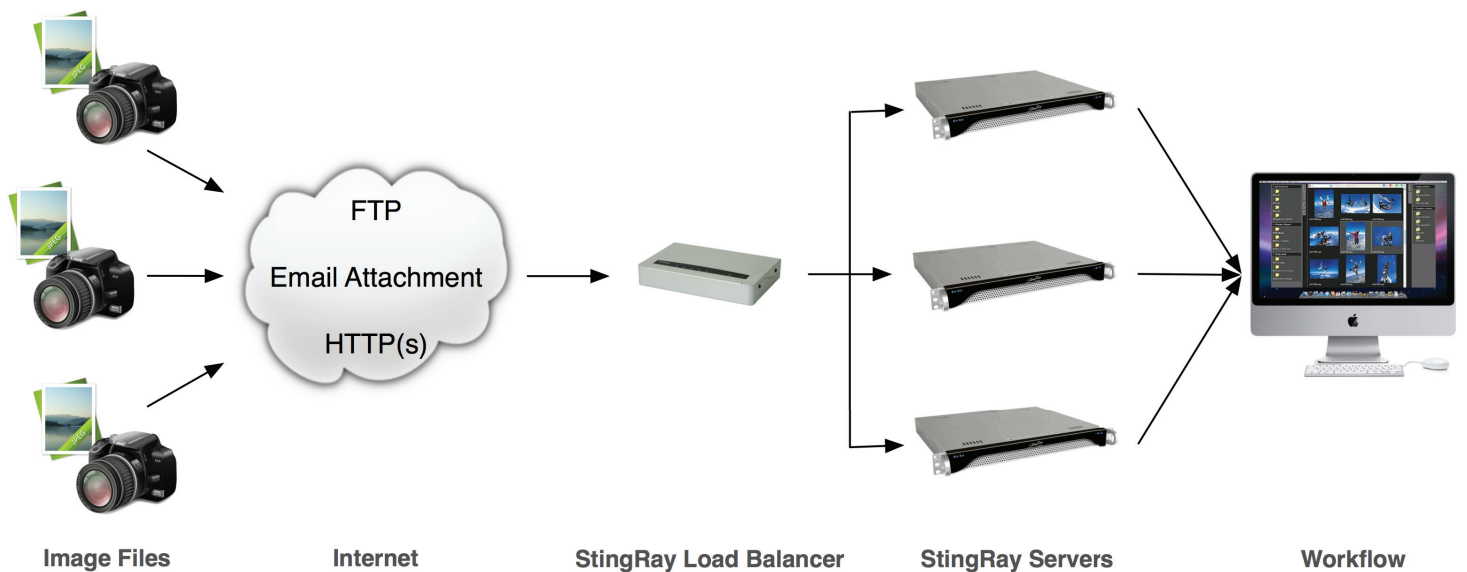
AUTOMATION: Integrating the delivery of data into the picture desk workflow has to be simple to set up, intuitive to amend and not require any special technical knowledge. The ability to deliver to multiple workflows across multiple servers should also be possible as should email notification options.

SECURITY: FTP is generally considered the standard delivery protocol by photographic agencies when sending to a publishers picture desk. Given FTP's inherent security flaws a high volume file transfer solution should address security concerns such as how the upload of malicious files is addressed, will the network be compromised and how secure is the data when received.

Exactly how can all of this be achieved?

It's in this exact scenario that StingRay comes into its own. Although it is typically deployed as a single server setup, StingRay was designed specifically with Publisher's in mind and can be run as a clustered solution that can be scaled to cope with any volume of incoming data. Existing StingRay deployments have been known to handle up to 20GB of incoming data daily comprising of about 10,000 jobs (single or multi file uploads)!

This is how it works:



StingRay Publisher's Picture Desk Workflow Diagram

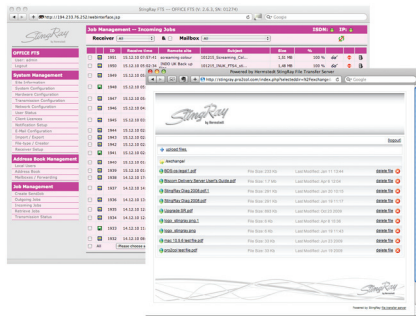
How would StingRay work for me?

- Calculate how much data your business could receive or is currently receiving and install the appropriate number of StingRay servers (a single StingRay server can easily handle up to 3500 incoming data transfers daily).
- Multiple StingRay servers will contain the same configuration of customer details and data forwarding options.
- A StingRay Load Balancer will help to equally distribute the load over multiple servers.
- Upon receipt of incoming files, StingRay can flatten any folder hierarchy's.
- All individual files can then be forwarded to the internal Picture Desk workflow.
- Once the files have been processed and forwarded, the StingRay servers can then be set to auto delete - preventing the hard disk from reaching its full capacity.

What are the benefits of this setup?

In addition to the ability to deal with such high volumes of data, StingRay offers a range of features and functionality that add value to any Picture Desk workflow.

SIMPLICITY: StingRay provides internal users with a simple web interface to track and monitor any files received. In addition StingRay also provides a range of file delivery options, designed to make the file transfer submission process as quick and simple as possible. If FTP isn't an option then files can be submitted via a web browser. Should it be required, StingRay also supports the receipt of email attachments.



Internal & External Web Interfaces

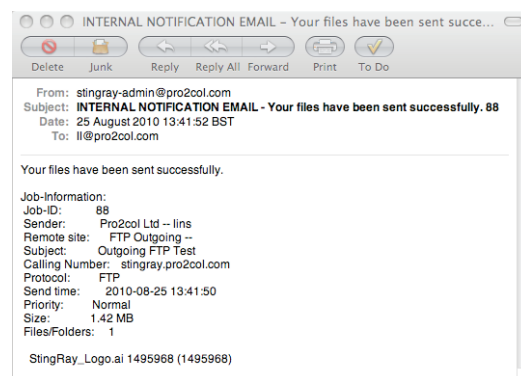
RELIABILITY: As each server within StingRay's multi-server set-up runs independently of one another, files will continue to be received by the unaffected servers within the workflow ensuring a constant flow of data at all times.

MANAGEMENT: StingRay provides IT administrators with a range of features to simplify the management of incoming data. Files successfully forwarded can be automatically deleted, StingRay will also email the administrator(s) when it encounters problems and it provides for network monitoring via SNMP.

AUDITING: StingRay keeps detailed logs of all of the jobs that it processes, providing a full audit trail for compliance purposes. Logs can be automatically exported daily in high volume environments.

AUTOMATION: StingRay provides a simple, intuitive web interface for users to configure incoming addresses and workflows. It allows for forwarding of files to multiple servers and provides a range of email notification options. As a self-managing server StingRay has the ability to auto-restart processes in the event of failure.

SECURITY: StingRay has been designed with security in mind; routing between the Internet and internal network has been removed, files are stored in an SQL database in a format that won't allow auto-execution and should it be required it supports secure delivery protocols. In addition virtual partitions are used for each upload, ensuring that at no point is uploaded data ever available to another customer.



Internal Email Notification

Why StingRay?

It's a combination of StingRay's unique multi-server setup, value added features and inexpensive price tag that make this large file transfer server the ideal solution for any Picture Desk workflow environment. A scalable set-up that can be adapted to accommodate the needs of any high volume file transfer environment, StingRay promotes efficient and reliable file transfer processes whilst providing the system management, automation and security features that are considered essential for maintaining an effective, completely 'hands off' automated workflow - all at an affordable price. Once implemented, the optimal workflow will save time and ultimately result in significant cost savings and greater productivity.



For more information regarding Hermstedt StingRay or to discuss your high volume file transfer requirements, please don't hesitate to contact Pro2col on:

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