



HLW Deploys Panzura Freedom to Enable True Collaboration

With over 125 years of continuous operation, HLW is one of the oldest design firms in New York. They started out doing work for Bell Labs when it was actually run by Alexander Graham Bell. Today they continue that trend, doing design work from some of the world's leading tech companies, including Panasonic and HP. During that time they have learned the importance of collaboration.

Customer Challenge

HLW has about 250 employees spread across five global offices, with locations in New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles, London and Shanghai. Employees at each of these offices regularly need to work together on projects where they have to share resources, particularly between the New York and Los Angeles offices.

Employees needed to share files across locations in real time so that they could collaborate on projects using modern business and design tools, such as Revit. While they could connect from one location to another, the performance was such that their users could not effectively do any work.

"We really just wanted a way to skip the whole remote desktop to a local computer process. While a valid configuration, it was cumbersome at best and the level of investment involved to make it work did not make sense," said Dan Bracey, Director of IT and Design Technology at HLW

Also, HLW wanted a solution that provided for disaster recovery and business continuity. Their goal was to be able to get their data to an offsite location where it would be secure and could be made available on an as needed basis. While they had an existing offsite backup solution, it was expensive and they needed a new solution that offered greater capacity. This was the last piece that they needed for their disaster recovery and business continuity plans.

HLW had already tried to solve these challenges by implementing a hybrid cloud solution that used centralized file locking, but that solution was not living up to expectations. This was particularly true for collaboration across sites using Revit.

Revit has a built in file synchronization tool that allows more than one person to work on a file at the same time. Revit has the ability to allow those people to simultaneously check out objects and to synchronize those files back to a single file.

"We were looking for a way to workshare Revit files across offices," said Bracey. "We soon realized the solution we were using would not accomplish our goals and was not compatible with standard Revit workflow. At that point we began looking for an alternative."

Customer Challenge

- Globally distributed sites needed to collaborate in real time
- Existing solution did not support Revit
- Offsite backup was getting expensive and running out of space

Solution

- Panzura Freedom Collaboration

Results

- Teams can collaborate effectively
- Revit is fully supported
- Hardened disaster recovery plan

Vertical

- AEC



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Chosen Solution

HLW chose Panzura Freedom Collaboration to meet their disaster recovery, business continuity, and global file locking needs. With Panzura, all unstructured data is moved to cloud storage while only active data is cached on flashed-based appliances. This enabled HLW to take advantage of the economics, scalability, and durability of cloud storage while delivering the high performance needed by their users.

The Panzura CloudFS provides real-time, immediately consistent, distributed file locking that works, which eliminates any data integrity issues with users creating multiple versions when collaborating on the same file from different sites. Users do not need to change the way they access files and can continue working as intended with increased productivity and less time waiting for files to load.

Further, the Panzura solution offers cloud data protection that is designed to protect, encrypt, and recover data globally. In the event of a problem, such as a cryptovirus attack, user error, or other issue, Panzura Freedom provides fast, simple recovery for anything from the entire file system all the way down to an individual file for a near-zero RPO.

Results

HLW was able to break free of the limitations of their existing, centralized solution by implementing a Freedom Collaboration instance in each of their five global locations. The distributed file locking of Freedom Collaboration seamlessly lets users in each location work together as if they were in the same room.

“File access is now a breeze” said Erick Hernandez, HLW IT Manager, “It’s super-fast and that’s because of the peer-to-peer communication. File locking doesn’t have to go through a third party”.

Since their earlier solution was based on generic servers they were able to re-purpose them for other needs. Some offices were able to get needed upgrades.

Bracey summed up what may be the most important benefit to any IT professional. “I’ve increased the restfulness of my sleep knowing that our unstructured data is protected.”



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