H&M Software Supports Secure Photo Sharing for 250,000 Users with WS_FTP®

H&M Software logo

KEY CHALLENGES

› Transfering incredibly large high-resolution digital image files

› Tying file transfer server into their SQL based registration and billing systems to be able to offer users a controlled amount of complimentary disk space

› Setting up user home folders 'just-in-time' at first login

SOLUTION

› WS_FTP Server with ability to transfer very large digital files

› Login authentication encryption, digital certificate management and strong password policies for security

› ODBC integration, scalability, and customization

RESULTS

› Securely hosting 250,000 complimentary accounts for registered users of its StudioLine software

› Promotion of the broad adoption of web galleries for photo sharing

› Increased acceptance of new "DigitalXpress" product add-on for sending photos and other large files without traditional email limitations

H&M Software was founded in 1974 near Frankfurt Germany. A privately held company, H&M offers Internet and digital imaging solutions to business and home users worldwide. Its most popular product line StudioLine (www.StudioLine.biz) helps 250,000 photo enthusiasts and professionals to catalog, edit, manage and publish their evergrowing image collections.

The Challenge

"One problem with media files is the explosive growth in resolution, leading to incredibly large file sizes," says Andy Schmidt, Director of Technology at H&M Systems Software Inc. in New Jersey. "Professionals need to be able to send high-resolution images that often exceed attachment sizes and mailbox allowances of traditional email. StudioLine's new DigitalXpress feature reliably sends print-quality images and other large documents—regardless of size."

H&M Software needed a secure file transfer solution for online photo sharing and messaging to tie into its SQL database of registered software users. The ability to control quotas programmatically and communicate with its integrated FTP client was a must. "We started with an FTP server running Microsoft® IIS which did not offer easy integration with our SQL database. The other challenge was the volume of registered users which made the IIS user/quota model inefficient," says Schmidt.

The Vision

Schmidt recalls "We'd been using IMail™ by Ipswitch for more than eight years and were very happy to find that WS_FTP Server 6 with SSH offered similar ODBC integration and has been reviewed favorably as an Enterprise strength solution—it was an obvious choice to purchase."

File transferring wasn't the only purpose behind purchasing WS_FTP, "We also needed an easy way to tie active FTP accounts to our billing system, enabling a usage-based fee model for professional users with additional space demands. Because WS_FTP is based on an ODBC compatible SQL database, we will be able to leverage our know-how in database programming and integrate WS_FTP's database into our billing application," Schmidt explains. with 256-bit AES encryption over SSH, SFTP, SSL and FTPS transfer protocols. Rocksteady Studios' assets are encrypted by WS_FTP Professional when being sent to the agencies and require them to enter a password to access them. This password auto-expires and requires users to reset their password at any time, thus ensuring that Rocksteady Studios meet the legal requirements of its publisher.

The Solution

WS_FTP Server 6 with SSH incorporates best-in-class security features including 256-bit AES transport encryption, SHA-512 file integrity, new web administration, login authentication encryption, digital certificate management and strong password policies. Schmidt emphasizes "When you're dealing with the digital assets of photo professionals, they expect you to secure it with state-of-the-art technology."

H&M Software had been adding a number of photo sharing capabilities into StudioLine, including ready-made, customizable web-galleries. "This feature is ideal for showing off a large series of photos where email would prevent an attractive presentation. WS_FTP allows us to more tightly integrate this feature into StudioLine's GUI so that end-users are shielded from technical details."

"IIS FTP lacked the ability to check logon information against our registration database on SQL Server and automatically create the necessary home folders 'just in time' at the first login—that ability is crucial to us. Without the 'just in time' option, we would have to unnecessarily create 250,000 Microsoft® Windows® accounts, with 250,000 disk quota entries and 250,000 subfolders in the FTP server's root."

H&M Software chose WS_FTP for the ODBC integration, ability to automate account and quota management, scalability, and customization. "We implemented custom SITE commands that report allocated/used space to our own client software as well as folder rules that enforce per folder quotas," Schmidt says.

"We recently completed DigitalXpress, a media exchange facility that integrates online storage with the desktop interface and allows photographers to send print resolution images," continues Schmidt. "WS_FTP increases acceptance of the new product feature because users can use our preconfigured FTP space, instead of having to figure out their own FTP connection settings."

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The Future

H&M Software plans to use WS_FTP to host complimentary accounts for registered users to promote broad adoption of DigitalXpress, and will open the ability to market for-charge upgrades to higher space allocations. Schmidt says in the future, they plan to tie WS_FTP to their online store, so that paid accounts and quota upgrades are automatically enabled in WS_FTP.

About Ipswitch, Inc.

Ipswitch helps solve complex IT problems with simple solutions. The company's software is trusted by millions of people worldwide to transfer files between systems, business partners and customers; and to monitor networks, applications and servers. Ipswitch was founded in 1991 and is based in Lexington, Massachusetts with offices throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia. For more information, visit www.ipswitch.com.

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