



Brain Zoo Studios embrace work in the cloud

Brain Zoo Studios is an Emmy® Award-winning animation production studio based out of Los Angeles, California, that specializes in video games, not only as content creators, but also in animation production, asset building and cinematics. They also produce trailers, commercials, animated TV series and animated movies.

After working remotely for a year and a half, Brain Zoo Studios decided that it was time to bring the studio permanently into the cloud. They have since spent 6,077 hrs working remotely in SimpleCloud and are enjoying the flexibility of scaling up and down depending on the project requirements at any given moment. We spoke with Mo Davoudian, CEO and President of Animation at Brain Zoo Studios, about their experience.

What initial challenges did you face?

We had actually been set up to do remote work for some employees back in 2016, so when Covid hit there was a natural progression for us to work online. But, after a year and a half of having an office space that nobody was in and seeing that working remotely really works, we started searching for solutions that could make this more permanent, or that could be hybrid in the future. We definitely wanted a solution that could give us the ability to work remotely at a 100% capacity.

What were some of your top requirements and goals?

We were looking for a cost effective solution that allowed us to have the ability to scale at any given moment. We scale up and down depending on our productions, so having the ability to scale the studio and have multiple machines and resources at our disposal is super important. When we were brick and mortar based, we had a lot of machines and the infrastructure set up already. But, if there was a moment where we had to expand the studio, then we would have to get a whole bunch of new machines, and given the Covid situation and the prices with the supply chain issues that were going on, it would make it almost impossible. Having access to software at any time on a particular machine was also something that we were looking for, i.e. not having to install and uninstall licenses all the time.



Security was also a big factor, because all of our clients are very security conscious. SimpleCloud's security is pretty high up there. The evaluations that our clients have to do are within the SimpleCloud interface, not locally, so that was super important to us. That kind of security is also very, very important to our clients. Having access to additional machines for rendering, if we have to work in Unreal, or if we get an Artist that uses some software that we haven't used before, and then also being able to apply licenses across many machines.

The IT side of it was another requirement. Having a partner that has confident IT solutions in place where if we need something that's IT related, it can be handled in a very short timeframe. Some of our clients will give us a month's lead time to get everything in place, but others want us to get things done immediately. Being able to work quickly and efficiently, and getting things up and running in a very short period of time is so important, which is why SimpleCloud has been working really well for us. And the CineSys team has been very responsive, which is great. When something comes up, we immediately send out a ticket and the team has been quick to solve any issues.

Did you try any other similar solutions?

We looked into Amazon and some other solutions. We're a smaller company at the moment and cost is also a factor for us. The other solutions just weren't there yet, or weren't cost-effective.

How was the initial implementation of SimpleCloud?

It was really relatively simple to get up and running. Setting up the studio and then onboarding the Artists was pretty much a cakewalk. Mostly everybody we onboarded didn't spend a lot of time trying to figure out what was going on, the interface works well. We haven't had any complaints about the onboarding process, how the Artists are working, or how they get around the system. It's a good setup.

How has it worked out so far?

So far it has worked out great! We haven't really missed a beat. SimpleCloud gives us the latitude in terms of the talent pool that we have access to. We're no longer just grabbing the talent pool that's in LA, or the talent pool that's across the country, but it's now global. We actually have people that we have been working with from around the country, whether it's from Florida, Texas, or New Jersey, and then we're expanding out to other parts of the world, like India and Europe.



Have there been any issues when working with people in different regions?

So far we haven't heard of any complaints about things being slow or lagging. The only issues that we ran into were technical things that were happening to everyone across the board and not specific to one region. Those issues were quickly resolved.

Once we got our software, the machines, and the accounts up and running, it all worked really well. The SimpleCloud interface for setting up accounts and onboarding Artists has been very efficient. It's not a hard process and that makes us more self-sufficient.

You use ShotGrid for management, Autodesk products for animation, and Unreal Engine?

Yes, that's correct, and we haven't used any of the Adobe products quite yet, but those will probably be on the horizon for us. So far we've been doing editorial locally, but we want to push that online as well.

Could you give us a brief description of your current workflow?

We do daily video meetings between all of the employees utilizing Teams. Those are just on their local workstations. The rest of the work is done using Autodesk products and managed through ShotGrid on SimpleCloud. Even the Producers are on SimpleCloud to manage the process, and manage the team, and to exchange files with clients. Our studio is also managed through the SimpleCloud interface.

Do you have any advice for other companies looking to work remotely?

My advice would be that this is not a guess anymore of whether or not something like this can work. It actually works. We're proof that it works. This is the future of how things are going to be done, whether it's in games, or animation. It allows companies to access greater talent pools that they wouldn't have had access to, because they are in a brick and mortar situation. For us it's now a global talent pool versus a localized one.

"I recommend SimpleCloud, because it makes things a lot easier for us and stress-free. It opens any company up to have greater flexibility and growth."

- Mo Davoudian, CEO, Brain Zoo Studios -

Company: Brain Zoo Studios

Location: Los Angeles, California

Product: SimpleCloud