

Customer Profile: Seven Network

Company: Seven Network
Location: Sydney, Australia
Products: Autodesk Smoke, 3ds Max,
Maya and Combustion
Projects: Promo work & marketing spots

While the company name refers to the half-century-old network's location on the Australian television dial, it might just as well refer to the number of days and nights per week their Autodesk® Smoke® systems are running full-tilt. Seven Network is currently dominating the Australian television ratings, in large part due to the dedicated group of editors churning out the station's massive amount of promo and design work on a daily basis. Backing them up are two Smoke systems running on the Linux® operating system, which was added to the network's arsenal. It was right around that time that Senior Editor Meredith Healy made the jump from freelancer to full-time Senior Editor at Channel Seven.

"They had been outsourcing nearly all of their marketing, and some of their promo and design work before the Smoke systems arrived," says Healy. "Since then, all of the promo work, and nearly all of the marketing spots are done in-house. It was totally impossible to accomplish the amount of quality work required on the old box, which wasn't capable of doing true 3D text or working in a 3D environment, or really any complicated effects compositing. In the end, Seven Network chose Smoke because it is the only

system capable of handling the phenomenal amount of work done here. It's the only system with sufficiently powerful tools."

Healy knows whereof she speaks. Originally a linear editor before migrating first to Edit-box, Henry, and Avid® systems, she seized the opportunity to learn the Smoke system almost as soon as it appeared in her native land. Healy's team at Seven Network includes fellow editors Peter Morris, Suzique Doughty, and Tory Lattin, as well as regular freelancer, Giselle Epstein, all of whom keep both Smoke systems running day and night.

In addition to voluminous promo work for well-known shows such as Grey's Anatomy, Lost, Desperate Housewives, Criminal Minds, and others, the Smoke team does a lot of in-channel marketing, in addition to their promo work.



Image courtesy of Seven Network.

"Smoke is the only system capable of handling the phenomenal amount of work accomplished at Seven. As our day-to-day, get-it-out system, Smoke is absolutely invaluable."

– Meredith Healy

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Greenscreen shoots are frequent at the network, and outstanding results are achieved by interaction with artists on Autodesk® 3ds Max®, Autodesk Maya®, and Autodesk® Combustion® software, and other systems for 3D modeling and design, all of which are linked directly to the Smoke systems. All offline editing is done in Avid, then transferred as TGA files or by EDL to the Smoke system. The easy interactivity and workflow enables the Seven editors to access and perfect all the shots they need.

“Depending on the day, we’ll go through a series of channel promos and effects comps, then on to sports, news and marketing projects,” says Healy. “Seven does a great deal of sports broadcasting, including the very popular AFL football. We also have the Olympics coming up, so we are beginning to work on packages for the event. The challenges are non-stop with such a huge amount of promo work. Every job incorporates different amounts of effects compositing, 3D, color correction, DVE effects and so on, that need to be replicated and updated as the various shows go through on a weekly basis. Smoke is amazing at helping us accomplish replication work really quickly. The system also helps us incorporate an appropriately big look without spending weeks working on it. We just don’t have that time luxury. Fortunately, having Smoke means we can do everything faster, while not compromising on quality.”



Image courtesy of Seven Network.

Healy attributes some of that Smoke speed to the fact that both systems are running on Linux, “As a freelancer, I used Smoke on Octane,” she says. “There’s no doubt that Linux is faster and better. Of course, the more speed you get, the more you want.”

And should there be an issue with either system, Healy and her team know they can count on support from Autodesk Australia.

“The Autodesk guys over here have been awesome with the setup of the system,” says Healy. “When you’re pushing the boxes seven days a week, maintenance tends to fall to the side, but they’ve been outstanding when we have any kind of issue. And we’ve not ever missed a deadline or had any product not go to air. Smoke has been incredibly reliable.”

– Meredith Healy, Senior Editor
Seven Network