



ZTEdge™
By Ericom Software

For TPN Vendor Jellyfish Pictures, ZTEdge Web Isolation Plays a Key Supporting Role



Customer profile

Award-winning TPN vendor animation and VFX production studio and industry trendsetter in adopting technologies that streamline operations and add business value.

Industry

Entertainment and gaming

Challenges

- Protect valuable IP and content from intentional and inadvertent exposure
- Increase productivity and reduce user frustration by enabling seamless MPA-compliant web browsing
- Apply TPN-required granular access controls
- Protect content, workstations and networks from cyberattack and breach

Background

Jellyfish Pictures is an award-winning visual effects and computer-generated animation studio that works with some of the most prominent content creators in the world, including Lucas Films, HBO, Netflix, and DreamWorks, as well as producing original animated children's content.

They are also among the most technology-forward organizations in the business, having transitioned to fully virtual, cloud-based studio infrastructure in 2019. Jellyfish Pictures continues to be an entertainment industry trendsetter in adopting technologies that streamline operations and add business value.

The Challenge

As a Trusted Partner Network (TPN) vendor, Jellyfish Pictures operates in strict compliance with MPA Content Security Program Best Practices Guidelines, which are designed to protect content during production, post-production, marketing and distribution. Unauthorized, pre-release exposure of images or scenes can result in millions of dollars of losses for content owners and distributors.

"One of the requirements of the MPA is that there is no general outbound internet access allowed," said Jeremy Smith, Jellyfish Pictures Chief Technology Officer. "That is simply to stop things like data leaks and uploading content to places like YouTube. All it would take is one clip or one frame of a film, and the security is then compromised. That's very much on our radar."

Until a few years ago, this requirement meant that Jellyfish Pictures artists could not receive or send emails or use the internet in any way as they worked. This limitation was extremely frustrating for users. And while it accomplished the goal of protecting content, it also took a significant productivity toll.

Results

- TPN-compliant, high-performance internet access increased user productivity and reduced frustration while preventing exposure of valuable IP
- Simple management interface enables granular control of browser activity, including website categories and sites that can be accessed and types and sizes of files that can be shared
- Air-gapping endpoints from internet prevents hackers, ransomware and other malware from reaching studio network and content

The Remote Browser Isolation Update

More recently, the MPA updated its security best practice guidelines to permit internet and webmail access via remote browser isolation (RBI). RBI airgaps studio workstations from the internet by creating a virtual web browser in an isolated container in the cloud or on a remote server, and sending only safe rendering data to the user endpoint. In effect, it is equivalent to using a different device to access the internet -- only on the same workstation.

Critically for creative content production studios like Jellyfish Pictures, RBI solutions also enable policy-based control of which sites can be accessed, what files (if any) can be shared via the web or email, and under which conditions browser functions such as printing, copying and pasting can -- or cannot -- be used. This enables TPN vendors to eliminate risk of content exfiltration via email or, for instance, cloud storage or social media sites. Policies may be individualized or category-based, enabling greater privileges for the few individuals trusted to transfer content to and from Jellyfish customers and partners.

In addition to safeguarding valuable content, RBI protects studio endpoints and networks from malware, viruses and ransomware that are spread via the web. No active code from the internet ever reaches user endpoints. Any malicious content, such as data-stealing malware or ransomware, within websites that users visit remains in the isolated browser and is destroyed once the user stops interacting with the site.

Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

Jellyfish Pictures seized the opportunity to increase productivity by enabling users to access email and visit websites that they need. They implemented a RBI solution that was, at the time, the choice of many TPN vendors.

Initially, users were extremely pleased with their newly granted ability to use email and the web from their workstations. Within a short time, however, many grew frustrated with the quality of the browsing experience.



“We have used several different products to try to get around the limitations on internet use, but there were always performance-level issues. For example, the audio did not work correctly, or when you were scrolling, the frame rate was really jagged. Users basically felt like they were being held back as they browsed. That’s what we needed to solve.”

Jeremy Smith,
Chief Technology Officer, Jellyfish Pictures



Solution

As the moving force behind Jellyfish Picture's technology-forward approach, Jeremy Smith continued researching alternative RBI solutions in hopes of finding a higher-performance solution – which is how ZTEdge Web Isolation came to his attention.

After hearing about the solution and seeing a demo, he quickly decided that a proof of concept (POC) was in order. "The POC went very well," he said. "The ability to provide an almost native experience, from a performance level, to make it transparent to the end user was our requirement. We did some performance testing and got to see exactly how ZTEdge would work. And it held up well."

Ericom support engineers worked closely with Jellyfish to ensure that the integration was seamless and rigorous TPN requirements were met. "Working with the team has been great," Jeremy Smith said. "They've been really responsive."

ZTEdge Web Isolation is easy to deploy, since in contrast to many other RBI solutions, it is clientless, with no agents to install on individual workstations. Since the Jellyfish Pictures workforce tends to expand and contract based on the needs of each project, the ability to deploy ZTEdge without installing anything on individual users' workstations is particularly attractive. They found policies simple to set up and the solution to be extremely usable in general.

Users, too, were quick to notice the improved browsing experience. And as visual media professionals, they particularly appreciate the fact that ZTEdge Web Isolation allows each website to be streamed at the level that is most suitable.

Conclusion

As a technologically sophisticated TPN audited vendor, Jellyfish Pictures was an early adopter of browser isolation to enable its artists to access email and the web while safeguarding valuable IT and content from exfiltration and exposure. Knowing the RBI space well put them in a unique position to understand the key differences between Ericom's solution and the rest of the market.

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“When users are on the workstations that we provision, their internet access is very strictly controlled. The IP and data on those workstations are the crown jewels and they need to be safely guarded. What can get in or out is very tightly regulated by us, on a practical basis. That's where ZTEdge comes in, to help us meet our compliance requirements. ZTEdge is a very high-performance solution that enables browsing to feel native. It makes users' lives better. If people are looking for a high-performance solution in this space, Ericom ticks the boxes.”

Jeremy Smith,
Chief Technology Officer, Jellyfish Pictures