TIFF Deploys Amazon Workspaces to Rapidly Provision and Scale Secure Desktops

CDW guides TIFF in the delivery of an improved employee experience through Desktop–as–a–Service model

TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival)

PROJECT	AWS Workspaces Deployment
INDUSTRY	Motion Pictures & Film
CDW PRACTICE	Cloud

Case study | TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival)

TIFF creates transformational experiences for film lovers and creators of all ages and backgrounds. As Canada's premiere home of cinema, TIFF offers screenings, lectures, discussions, festivals, workshops, events, professional development and opportunities to meet, hear and learn from filmmakers from Canada and around the world. TIFF has used AWS services for years to drive innovation and to provide a better experience for its employees and community members.

CUSTOMER CHALLENGE

Although TIFF runs programs year-round, the annual film festival puts a heavy strain on resources in a relatively short timeframe. Typically employing approximately 200 people, in the lead up to their world-famous festival they scale up in their busy season to 800 seats. The IT organization was looking for a solution to support a remote workforce without the headache and cost that comes with implementing and supporting an on-premise virtual desktop infrastructure solution.

OUR APPROACH

TIFF's Director of Information Technology turned to CDW for help in deploying Amazon Workspaces, which is a managed, secure desktop-as-a-service (DaaS) solution. "With most of their infrastructure already running on AWS, our client felt Amazon Workspaces would be a great DaaS solution, helping them provide a better employee experience," said a CDW account executive. CDW's cloud practice lead adds, "we have a long track record in supporting TIFF's AWS environment, so it was a good fit."

In March 2020, the CDW team began the set-up process. "We initially worked with TIFF on a production accelerator project where we set up the initial instances for the customer, and they then deploy it more broadly to their end users," said CDW's cloud practice lead. Since it was being deployed into a relatively empty AWS account, several pre-requisite services were set up to support the Workspaces implementation. This included establishing a two-way trust between the AWS Managed Active Directory Service and the client's on-premise Active Directory Services. An AWS Storage Gateway was established for log retention and backup of on-premise systems but was also accessible to the Workspaces environment as a central storage option. Permission and roles for access into the files stored on the Storage Gateway were controlled with Active Directory Groups and roles. The end result is the ability to spin up separate Workspaces using the Active Directory credentials from the client's on-premise Active Directory, with access to a shared storage space using AWS Storage Gateway.

AWS SERVICES USED:

- EC2
- AWS Managed AD
- AWS Workspaces
- AWS Storage Gateway

SPECIFIC MICROSOFT PRODUCTS USED IN THE SOLUTION:

- Microsoft Active Directory
- Microsoft Server 2016
- Microsoft O365

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An EC2 instance joined to the Managed Active Directory domain provided the client with administrative access to the AWS Active Directory service as needed. Activity on this instance was predicted to be minimal, as reflected by the small instance size and the lack of activity. This instance was placed into a public subnet with an EIP due to networking restrictions from the client and is promptly turned off with the EIP removed when not in use.

Throughout this process, CDW provided architecture and implementation documentation, delivering the information necessary so TIFF knows how to modify, expand or remove the deployed workspaces. This knowledge transfer is key to CDW's mandate of empowering clients. "Our team is here to help but our primary goal in any of our deployments is to equip our clients with knowledge, so they understand how the environment was built and how it can be supported going forward," says CDW's account executive.

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OUTCOME

TIFF is now able to support their entire workforce during its most busy period of the year. "Our client can spin up and down their environment as needed when they have their peak usage period during their film festival. They no longer have to over–purchase desktop and laptop resources to satisfy their spikes in demand," CDW's cloud practice lead mentions.

The deployment of Amazon Workspaces has ensured TIFF can provide secure cloud desktops, including a range of compute, memory and storage resources for the 600 additional remote, mobile and contract employees that are onboarded to support their annual flagship festival event.

ARCHITECTURE DIAGRAM
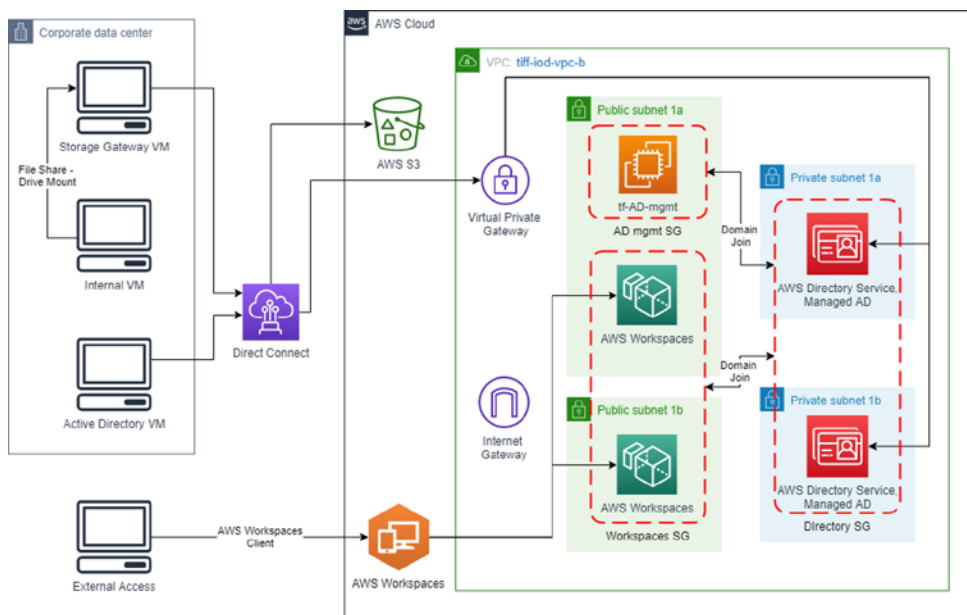
For more information, contact your CDW account team at 800.972.3922 or visit CDW.ca