

Case Study

Bill Nieman Photography

Specializing in Family Portraiture

Industry: Digital Photography

W.M.
Nieman



The Company

Located in Wisconsin Rapids, a rural and close-knit community in central Wisconsin, Bill Nieman Photography specializes in family portraiture, in particular, high school senior portraits. A photographer for 32 years, Bill Nieman began his career capturing weddings and family events and is now celebrated locally for his talent in capturing the individuality of local graduating seniors.

The Environment

- Windows® XP Professional Clients
- Adobe® PhotoShop® CS2 software
- Phase One Capture One Professional software
- Linksys® 16-Port 10/100/1000 Gigabit Switch
- Netgear® WGR614 Cable/DSL 54Mbps Wireless Router

The Challenge

About fifteen years into Bill Nieman's photography career, in 1991, the first professional digital camera was released. The introduction of digital photography gave rise to many new technologies to support the new artistry- which created large digital files. Along with computer technologies to manipulate, touch up and print these new photos, came the need to store, backup and protect these files.

Bill began using digital technology in 2003. The first images he recorded with his new digital camera were for a client he had already shot with his Hasselbad.

"I asked the client if I could try my new camera out on him. The next week I showed the lab manager, at KMI in Green Bay, what I had for images and I asked him 'Am I ready to shoot the digital alongside my Hasselbad?' he laughed and answered 'Just shoot digital, these are some of the best files I have ever seen. It's like you have been shooting digital all along!'" remembers Bill Nieman.

Behind the scenes, things were a little different. In the bad old days of film, Bill retouched the film by hand - doing any tone lightening on the negative itself and any deepening on each print. This took time and money.

"Technically speaking, the photographers of that era were better. If it wasn't done right at the camera, you were in trouble, especially when shooting color transparency film. You only had one chance and it better be good, damn good, or you lost the client," notes Nieman.

Enter programs like Adobe Photoshop and Phase One Capture One, software editing and RAW workflow software. With the advent of these types of programs, Bill began shooting all of his photos in RAW format and then enhancing the contrast, color, curve, density, hue and saturation with the software before converting them into TIFF-RGB and TIFF-CMYK files.

"These programs made making changes easier. You do it once, not on every negative and every print like the old days. This did open up the need for more robust computer equipment and storage for the large RAW files, Photoshop documents and TIFF images," said Nieman.

Why Bill Nieman Photography chose ReadyNAS

- RAID 5
- Hot swappable drives
- FTP Support
- UPS Monitoring and Auto Shutdown

Bill was using a LaCie Direct Attached Storage device, but with an increase of files, he needed to increase his storage capacity. Additionally, he required network capability so that the data could be accessed easily by multiple clients. For data integrity, he also required RAID with hot swappable drives and UPS monitoring with auto shutdown. Finally, he needed to be able to share files with his print lab and proofs with his clients over the internet.

About Bill Nieman Photography

Located in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, Bill Nieman Photography is a family run small business that specializes in family portraiture. High school senior portraits are the majority of the business, with approximately 300 sittings per graduation year.

Bill Nieman Photography
Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

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The Solution



ReadyNAS™ NV+

Network Attached Storage and RAID

Network Attached Storage was the right choice for Nieman Photography. With 300 sittings per year, they have a lot of RAW files that are typically 2-6 times larger than JPEGs. After each shoot, the RAW files are enhanced to create the best color, contrast and tone and in order to make deadlines, multiple workstations need to access the files quickly. ReadyNAS NV+ gave Nieman up to 3 TB of data storage and quickly serves up data to multiple locations when they need it.

ReadyNAS includes built-in hardware RAID, a feature crucial in Nieman's purchase decision. Hardware RAID manages the RAID independently of the Operating System, therefore has no negative effect on the performance of Nieman's machines. Running robust software programs and working with RAW files is already plenty of activity for their home-built AMD® Athalon 3000s to handle —adding the performance impact of software RAID was not an option. Nieman runs RAID 5, which stripes both data and parity information across the four 500 GB drives of his ReadyNAS, delivering fault tolerance and ensuring that the data is recoverable, even when failure of one drive occurs²

Eliminating downtime is important to Nieman and the ReadyNAS hot-swappable drives are an important part of that.

“You are only down when you are really busy and you don't have time to fool around. ReadyNAS lets me know which drive has failed and I can go in, swap it out and I am ready to go,” said Nieman.

UPS Monitoring and Auto Shutdown

Nieman Photography uses an uninterruptible power source (UPS) for all of their important IT equipment. Located in rural Wisconsin, they experience frequent power outages and a UPS is the safe way to ensure that all of their machines are kept up and running, even when commercial utility power is not available. For customers using a UPS, ReadyNAS includes UPS monitoring with auto shutdown. During a power failure, ReadyNAS monitors the existing battery life of the UPS and when the battery is low, ReadyNAS shuts down automatically, safeguarding the integrity of the data.

FTP Support

Nieman also required the ability to quickly transfer files to his photo print labs. In the old days, Bill would load his computer into his car, drive to Green Bay, Wisconsin and set up the computer in the print lab. With today's internet conveniences and the FTP support inherent in ReadyNAS, Nieman can transfer files to his photo lab's remote server in minutes. Additionally, with ReadyNAS HTTP support, Nieman's clients can view their proofs through any regular web browser.

Summary

School pictures are taken religiously every year from Kindergarten on, but to high school seniors, that final portrait is a rite of passage. Nieman Photography recognizes the importance of each picture. With ReadyNAS, they are able to safely store both the RAW files for editing and the final TIFF files for print. RAID gives them the redundancy they need to protect against hardware failure and the hot-swappable drives ensure that they will continue to be productive, even in the face of drive failure. The Internet sharing capability, including FTP support allows Nieman to share proofs with their clients online and the UPS monitoring and auto shutdown that ReadyNAS offers gives them the reassurance that even during frequent power outages in rural Wisconsin, their data is safe.

¹ 3TB = 30,000 RAW Images @ 100MB each or 300,000 JPG Images @ 10 MB

² RAID5 will consume approximately 25% of the capacity to insure data protection

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