



MKS Toolkit Case Study

Sculptured Software

Sculptured Software, Inc. is one of the premier producers of video games for a variety of home entertainment systems. A wholly owned subsidiary of Acclaim Entertainment since 1995, Sculptured Software is known for its work with top games companies such as Atari, Broderbund, Disney, Electronic Arts, Nintendo, Parker Brothers and Time Warner Interactive.

Notable products in Sculptured's history include Jack Nicklaus Golf, NCA Basketball for Nintendo, Super Star Wars for Lucas Arts, and Mortal Kombat I, II and III, which were the company's first three-million unit sellers, and have been heralded as the best arcade conversions ever made.

The Need

Joe Barnes, a lead programmer at Sculptured Software, remembers struggling with various inadequacies of the PC programming and data management environment. "Try managing and working with a large-scale project using just Visual C++. You'd quit your job!" says Joe.

He adds, "When we develop a game, we generate thousands of files. For example, in the hockey game I'm working on right now, there are hundreds of motion data files describing player motion alone (skate, check, shoot, and so on). As often as 50 times a day, I may need to work with all of those files."

"Games are more memory-intensive now than ever before. So you end up having to compress data. I could write a batch file to handle the compression of hundreds of artwork files, but MKS Toolkit is much more flexible and makes the job much easier," says Barnes.

The Solution

To overcome some of the programming inadequacies inherent in the Windows environments, Joe relies on MKS Toolkit for Developers (formerly MKS Toolkit). Though Joe develops in Windows, he uses a command shell to run the tools in MKS Toolkit. He relies on MKS Toolkit to do complex searches and to automate tasks. "Yes, these things could be done in a batch file, but the batch file would be difficult to write. Using MKS Toolkit is a lot easier," Joe says.

What about those thousands of motion data files that used to present a problem? Joe explains, "I can use MKS Toolkit to find all of the skating files I need, quickly. If I save a few keystrokes each time I need to carry out a task like searching, the seconds really add up, saving me valuable time."

As for compressing those artwork files, MKS Toolkit gives Joe the ability to write shell scripts and a makefile. "The other day I was testing different texture sizes and color depths on some three-dimensional models in my latest game. I have a makefile and scripts to generate data files. I'll bet I ran it 50 times before lunch. It

Company Name:
Sculptured Software, Inc.

Location:
Salt Lake City, Utah

Business:
Develops a variety of entertainment products (wrestling, hockey, baseball, football games) for popular game platforms (Sony PlayStation, Sega Saturn, Nintendo 64 and Windows 95).

Vital Statistics:
128 full-time and contract employees. Founded in 1984, Sculptured is now a subsidiary of Acclaim Entertainment.

The Need:
To deliver some of the versatility and control of UNIX commands to the PC programming environment.

Solution:
MKS Toolkit for Developers (formerly MKS Toolkit)



would have taken me all day to do it by hand. I can honestly say MKS Toolkit makes me a better, more efficient programmer," says Joe.

MKS Toolkit for Developers is a package of more than 400 UNIX and Windows utilities for PC platforms. Its award-winning and powerful capabilities make it the first choice of developers from around the world, developers like Joe Barnes at Sculptured Software Inc.

Key UNIX utilities transform Windows programming platforms into UNIX workstations, while offering developers Windows-specific commands and integration enabling them to work with remarkable efficiency and productivity in this environment. Unlike other Windows-based utilities, MKS Toolkit lets corporations leverage their existing UNIX training, UNIX scripts, tool familiarity and skills to new programming platforms such as Windows.

"In game development, I use MKS Toolkit to do complex searches and to automate tasks. In fact, I use it any time I want to work more efficiently. I would have to work more hours a day without MKS Toolkit."

Joe Barnes, Sculptured Software lead programmer

Says Barnes, "Toolkit helps me automate tasks that would otherwise be manual. It saves me time, allowing me to focus on developing the best game possible."

The PC was not designed as a programming machine. Fans of UNIX often yearn to transport the most useful of UNIX operating systems utilities over to the PC platform. With MKS Toolkit, they can.

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