



# Magical animation studio boosts creativity and production speed

LAIKA, in Hillsboro, Oregon, produces award-winning animated films using powerful Dell Precision workstations



“Not only do we dramatically accelerate production, but we also gain much greater creative flexibility with our Intel-powered Dell Precision workstations, enabling artists to explore more options in less time.”

*David Rowe, Systems Support Manager, LAIKA*

## Customer profile



**Company** LAIKA  
**Industry** Arts, Entertainment and Media  
**Country** United States  
**Website** [www.laika.com](http://www.laika.com)

## Business need

LAIKA artists and technicians wanted new tools to speed up project turnarounds, thus saving development time while enabling more creativity.

## Solution

In order to do their jobs effectively and efficiently, artists and technicians were given high-performance Dell Precision workstations, featuring powerful Intel® processors and NVIDIA® Quadro® graphics cards.

## Benefits

- Accelerates animation and visual effects production
- Enhances creative flexibility
- Aligns technology capabilities with fast growth
- Attracts and keeps the best creative talent
- Provides space-saving deployment flexibility

## Solutions at a glance

- [Client Solutions](#)

LAIKA is a world-renowned, independent animation studio, known for three Oscar-nominated animated features: *The Boxtrolls*, *ParaNorman* and *Coraline*. The studio's next release, *Kubo and the Two Strings*, will premiere in theaters August 2016.

Hiding behind the walls of its modern office park headquarters outside Portland, Oregon, is a magical world. Inside is a sprawl of miniature sets plus their supporting infrastructure. It's where a fast-growing number of the world's best animators, artists, sculptors, set builders and technicians team up to develop bold, enduring stories released as big-screen films.

Stop motion animation is at the core of LAIKA's films, typically 90 minutes in length. Each one takes about two-and-a-half years to produce, requiring over 140,000 frames, all individually shot in painstaking detail. This involves more than 300 creative staff, supported by more than 100 administrative associates.

### High-tech wizardry behind the movie magic

Technology plays a big role in LAIKA's productions. Systems Support Manager David Rowe and 11 IT team members are responsible for the extremely powerful, high-tech wizardry coursing throughout the studio. It features stop action digital cameras, 3D printers, artist workstations, high-speed networking and a data center with its server-based rendering farm, storage and backup systems.

"Creative storytelling is our top priority, our heart and soul," Rowe says. "We want to make fresh and enduring stories that people will love for years. Having the most advanced, most powerful technology available helps attract and retain the world's best talent to develop and tell those stories in unique ways."

That's why Rowe and his IT colleagues strive to keep the entire studio equipped with the latest workstation technology, so the "creatives" can efficiently explore artistic options and streamline production as much as possible.

### Accelerate production, gain creative flexibility

"Dell provides a fantastic human and consultative approach," Rowe says. "They understand our business, keep us informed about coming new products to help us and never try to 'sell' us. And Intel, with its top research fabrication plant practically next door, is a really good friend, going back 10 years when they put their latest processors to work in our rendering farm."

Among LAIKA's newest workstation solutions are hundreds of Dell Precision Tower 7910 workstations for a wide range of 2D and 3D applications. Each comes with two Intel® Xeon® 10-core processors, 128GB of RAM and NVIDIA® Quadro® graphics cards, among other features. "Our artists can do on one tower what used to take two, plus animate multiple projects simultaneously," Rowe says. "Not only do we dramatically accelerate production, but we also gain much greater creative flexibility with our Intel-powered Dell Precision workstations, enabling artists to explore more creative options for a project."

For less graphic-intensive tasks, Rowe deploys Dell Precision Tower 5810 workstations with Intel Xeon quad-core processors, up to 64GB of RAM, and NVIDIA Quadro graphics cards. "We buy only two types of Dell Precision workstation towers here—the insane and the really insane," he says. "The 7910 is really insane, while the 5810 is just plain insane. New users can't imagine all they can do with these extremely powerful Dell Precision workstations, and then two weeks later, they can't do without them."

### Small form factor workstation enables on-set filming

Each of the studio's stages has a Dell Precision T3420 small form factor workstation, powered by an Intel Core™ i7 processor. It connects to a high-end digital camera used to shoot stop motion animation scenes. "Space is tight on our animation sets," Rowe explains, so the small footprint of Dell Precision

## Products & Services

### Services

Dell ProSupport

### Hardware

Dell Precision Rack 7910 workstations

Dell Precision Tower 5810 workstations

Dell Precision Tower 7910 workstations

Dell Precision T3420 small form factor workstations

Dell Wyse 5030 zero clients

### Partner

NVIDIA® Quadro® graphics cards

T3420 workstations gives us critical deployment flexibility."

Rowe has Dell ProSupport for all Dell Precision workstations but rarely uses it. "Our Dell hardware is so reliable, we never have to call for help," he says. Using the studio's 3D printers, animators can produce an unlimited number of character facial expressions to swap out as needed. However, because of the thin, powdery dust generated by the 3D printing environment, Rowe needed to separate the operator workstations from digital processing. To accomplish this, he deployed a Dell Wyse P25 zero client terminal with PC over IP technology networked to a Dell Precision R7910 rack workstation in the data center.

Rowe envisions LAIKA's 3D printing approach as a pilot model for a new desktop topology. "We plan a larger data center with many more Dell Precision rack workstations. Then via a brokering scheme, anyone anywhere in the studio can just dial up the number of Intel cores needed for the shot they're doing. This way we'll gain tremendous flexibility to align our computing power with our creative needs and users."

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