

On the Radar: LucidLink provides low-latency remote access to media assets

LucidLink allows for the streaming, rather than download, of on-premises/cloud-based assets

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Summary

Catalyst

The amount of content leveraged by media enterprises continues to rise, which means that additional requirements are needed to remotely access these media assets. The status quo for the remote workforce is to access these files through low-resolution proxies or by downloading large, multiple GB files. Furthermore, creatives in video production, for example, have a variety of large-file-based needs (e.g., editing, music, motion graphics, animation, color correction, and sound mixing) that can often only be dealt with through on-premises access. This is because of the high levels of latency and file storage associated with tackling these large media assets remotely.

Key messages

- LucidLink's solution provides remote end users with read or write access to on-premises or public cloud-based media assets, without the user needing to download the entire large media file (which still appears as if it were locally stored).
- LucidLink allows media enterprises to use S3-compatible storage on their application server in a similar way to how elastic block storage (EBS) is used.
- Media and entertainment (M&E) customers make up around 30% of LucidLink's current customer base.

Ovum view

What makes LucidLink's solution competitive with current file access solutions in the market is the fact that the streamed (not downloaded) media asset appears as if it is locally stored on the end user's system, allowing for native integration with editing solutions. Furthermore, by not needing to fully control the asset (i.e., LucidLink doesn't need to provide download access), LucidLink can provide security-minded customers with complete control over their assets while still providing users with remote file access.

Recommendations for enterprises

Why put LucidLink on your radar?

Media asset management (MAM) vendors, and cloud providers, object storage vendors, and managed service providers (MSPs) with a large share of media enterprise clientele should keep LucidLink on the radar. LucidLink's Filespaces addresses issues of distance and latency for remote interaction with media assets. The solution provides remote end users with read or write access to on-premises or public cloud-based media assets, without the user needing to download the entire large media file (which appears as if it were locally stored). For example, LucidLink can enable a MAM system's post-production end user to remotely edit a cloud-based media asset file on Adobe Premiere without downloading the file or relying on low-resolution proxies.

Media and entertainment customers make up around 30% of LucidLink's current customer base. The solution can handle most media storage use cases with some exceptions needing ultra-high computing (e.g., 16K rendering).

Highlights

Background

Founders Peter Thompson and George Dochev created LucidLink in 2016 to tackle the challenge of large file sharing over large distances through a cloud-native approach. Both founders were previously at DataCore, a software-defined storage company. Peter Thompson, LucidLink's CEO, served as VP of Emerging and Developing Markets and Managing Director of APAC over a 14-year tenure at DataCore. George Dochev, LucidLink's CTO, served as Director of Software Engineering and as DataCore's first software engineer over a 17-year tenure at the company.

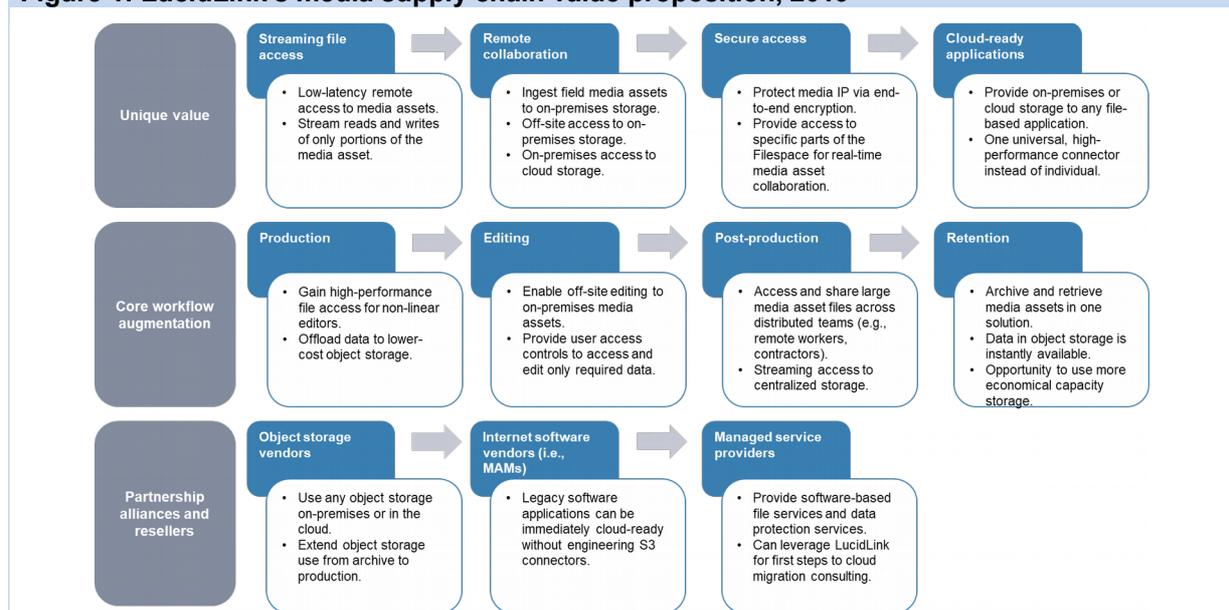
LucidLink's initial seed round of funding raised \$1.6m from Baseline Ventures in 2016. In 2018, the company raised a \$6m round of seed funding led by S28 Capital. Other 2018 seed round participants included Bain Capital Ventures, Baseline Ventures, Fathom Capital, and BrightCap Ventures.

Current position

LucidLink allows customers to use S3-compatible storage on their application server in a similar way to how EBS is used. Customers typically mount Lucid-S3 in EC2 as primary storage for applications to provide native access to the data both on-premises and the cloud. The data is hosted in a bucket on the customer's account and treated as a scalable block device. To achieve low-latency remote access to files, LucidLink's solution separates metadata and file data in separate planes and only syncs the metadata locally. The solution then *streams* the requested file data from the application.

LucidLink's Filespaces solution is a SaaS platform that can be used with most major operating systems (Linux, Windows, and MacOS), any device, and any object storage, on-premises, multi-cloud, or S3 cloud provider. Using object storage, the solution provides read and write streaming access to large media assets without end users needing to download (or sync) the file data. The asset shows up as a local file on the desktop, which allows for local integration with any production tools. The solution caches files (i.e., music, video, and images) at remote sites and delivers similar latency to a local network-attached storage (NAS) device.

Figure 1: LucidLink's media supply chain value proposition, 2019



Source: LucidLink

As LucidLink's Filespaces provides streaming access to files (as compared to download access), it doesn't need to control the files in the same way as some other remote file access companies do. This allows customers to have their own encryption key and full control over their media assets. Some other functionalities of LucidLink's offering include the following:

- administrators can set user controls for access to different media assets
- the LucidLink service manages metadata coordination, garbage collection, global locking, and more
- to provide Filespace redundancy, a Filespace instance can be captured, or "snapshotted," on a predetermined schedule for version control.

LucidLink partners include:

- S3-compliant object-store providers – cloud (Amazon, Alibaba, Digital Ocean, Google Cloud, IBM, Telefonica, and Wasabi) and on-premises (Cloudian, Zadara, Minio, Scality, and Nutanix)
- MSPs – Zitcom, Silicom Group, Trio, Telefonica, and Resource One.

As can be seen in Table 1, LucidLink's solution has a variety of video-focused applications.

Table 1: Video-focused use cases, 2019

Customer type	Business challenges/priorities	LucidLink application	Result
Creative studio	Employees needed a cloud-based solution that addressed file size and distance to allow the distributed workforce to remotely access files (not every employee used DropBox). IT spent a lot of time managing SAN storage.	Augmented on-premises storage using LucidLink Filespaces as the front end.	Remote file access allowed customer to leverage additional freelancers.
Government agency	Multiple processes (ingest video feeds, run analytics, and view output) required access to the same dataset. Needed dataset hosted in AWS Government Cloud.	Ingested video through AWS S3 Government Cloud to LucidLink Filespace.	Process complexity was reduced, and associated process costs decreased.
Software vendor	Training machine learning algorithm against video files. Only a few frames were needed from each of 20,000 videos (around 1GB), but each video needed to be downloaded.	Stored video footage in LucidLink S3 and placed Filespace in the server performing the training.	Allowed for immediate access to all 20TB of data. Local storage space was not consumed.

Source: Ovum

Data sheet

Key facts

Table 2: Data sheet: LucidLink

Product name	Filespaces	Product classification	Cloud-native file service
Version number	GA	Release date	May 2019
Industries covered	M&E, government, and healthcare	Geographies covered	Worldwide, US, EMEA and Japan
Relevant company sizes	All	Licensing options	SaaS
URL	www.lucidlink.com	Routes to market	Channel – MSPs, CSPs, M&E market, solution providers (object storage)
Company headquarters	San Francisco, CA, US	Number of employees	27

Source: Ovum

Appendix

On the Radar

On the Radar is a series of research notes about vendors bringing innovative ideas, products, or business models to their markets. Although On the Radar vendors may not be ready for prime time, they bear watching for their potential impact on markets and could be suitable for certain enterprise and public sector IT organizations.

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