

# The Hub Helps Creative Talent Win Brand Work with Cloudinary

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“Content is king for everyone in 2020, but for us at The Hub, it’s our lifeblood. The quality of our work is what we are built on. Outsourcing how we host and serve images speaks volumes – we empower another party to serve the very linchpin of our company – and that third party is Cloudinary.”

–James Cole, founder, The Hub

## Solution

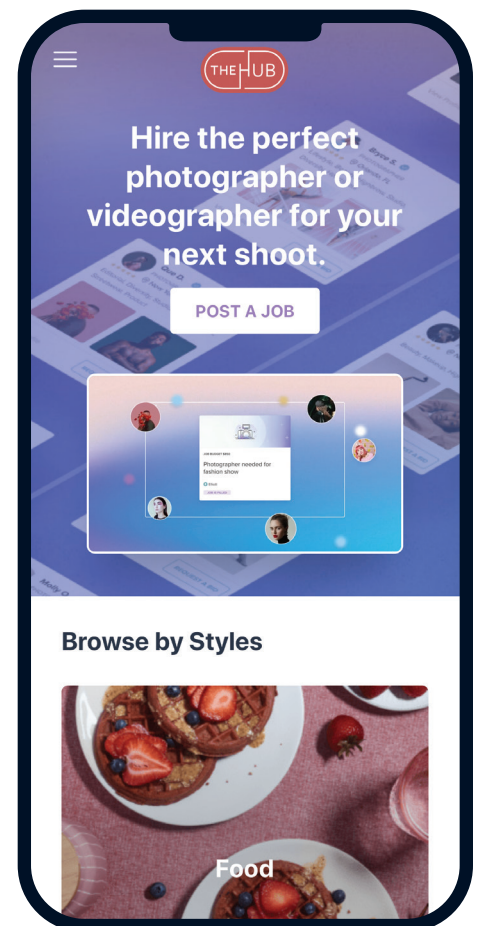
**The Hub**, an online marketplace that connects brands with creators, uses Cloudinary to help its community of creators quickly upload images and video to personal portfolios on the platform. Since The Hub needs as many as 10 unique size and aspect combinations for each uploaded primary image, Cloudinary automates critical processes that would otherwise bog down its team of front-end developers. The Cloudinary platform expedites the creation of portfolios available for brands to browse, thanks to automated asset manipulation and content delivery.

## Results

**Dynamic resizing of uploaded portfolio images and video without sacrificing quality**

**Reduced expenses otherwise associated with the storage of large file sizes**

**Streamlined server-less technology stack with robust image delivery capabilities**



## Company

The Hub is decentralizing the creative process through its two-sided online marketplace that changes the way brands hire creators. The old model of committing all creative resources to one agency of record has proven time-consuming and expensive. Additionally, brands are limited to content that is only as good as the handful of people on that agency's team. Brands today shouldn't have to fight a battle between capacity and cost. They need efficiency in the creation of high-quality visual content.

Instead, The Hub platform offers access to more than 39,000 photographers, videographers and models. It allows brands to quickly find and hire highly vetted talent in every major U.S. city for their next project. What's more, **the final images and video are created five times faster than traditional agencies and production houses for one-ninth of the price, on average.** The brand is more likely to get exactly what they need through a Wisconsin-based photographer in their mid-twenties, for example, who charges a fraction of what a day-rate photographer would in Manhattan.

The Hub also serves as a community for creators to connect with one another, as in the case of a photographer finding the right model for a shoot. Job posting, hiring, project management, the transfer of deliverables and final payment to the creator – all of it takes place directly and securely in The Hub.

## The Challenge: Burdened Front-End Developers and Manual Image Manipulation

As former creators themselves, The Hub team uniquely understands the intricacies of securing creative work, as well as the increasing visual media needs of direct-to-consumer (DTC) brands looking to stay relevant and competitive. Consumers crave highly visual experiences online, and brands feel the pressure to churn out more compelling visual content as efficiently as possible.

The process on The Hub is simple: brands post their jobs with location, details and budget, which get added to the platform's job boards available for creators to browse. Within 24 hours, brand clients will receive anywhere from 10 to 30 bids, showing them interested talent with their price points, relevant experience, and ratings from past brand interactions. A client will select the one they find most compelling and then send a contract, which the photographer reviews and accepts. That contract is now binding, and agreed-upon funds are held in escrow until the project is complete. The creative works their magic, uploads final assets available for the brand to download directly, and payment is dropped into the bank account of the photographer or videographer.

Before a project can begin, however, photographers and videographers must curate a personal portfolio on The Hub platform. This requires creatives to upload their best photos and videos – which are often enormous files – to showcase their skills. At any given moment, there are more than 2.5 million photos and videos live on The Hub inside of creator portfolios. In order for pages to still load quickly on the website or mobile app, it's paramount that images be sized down while still looking sharp.

The Hub's founder James Cole originally saw two options for resizing images and video upon upload – one puts the onus on the creative, and the other burdens The Hub's team of front-end developers. "On one hand, we could be very restrictive to our creative community and ask them to abide by a maximum pixel size and file size," Cole explained. "For really experienced photographers, this is no problem, but for more novice individuals, they may not know how to quickly export a file with those restrictions. The alternative is that we say to creatives, 'Have at it – you want to upload a massive 30 MB file? That's fine.' The downside here, obviously, is that our team is responsible to manually down-res it to the largest resolution we'd need."

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*“Cloudinary is a place for our online community to resize and store images efficiently without sacrificing quality, and empowers us to display images dynamically.”*

–James Cole, founder, The Hub

## The Cloudinary Solution: Automating Portfolio Management for Brands and Talent

Prior to engaging with Cloudinary, The Hub team of developers hard coded all of the portfolio asset resizing manually. The Hub leverages Amazon Simple Storage Services (S3) for storage, and Cloudinary for dynamic asset optimization for portfolio uploads. Cloudinary came as a recommendation from a developer directly to Cole, and since implementing the solution, The Hub has seen increased efficiency of the visual workflow.

“Cloudinary was exciting to us for two main reasons,” said Cole. “The first was the automatic optimization of smaller file sizes without any negative impact on quality. After all, the visual quality of our creatives’ portfolios is critical to them landing work with today’s leading DTC brands. It’s a non-negotiable, really. The second benefit we were seeking was the efficient resizing for different aspect ratios and device requirements. A photo or video should be just as vivid and eye-catching on an iPhone or tablet as it is on a desktop monitor.”

Cole went on to explain how the dynamic transformation piece was what they were most interested in when exploring how Cloudinary might help them. “If the same image or video appears across our website in different places, our front-end developers would otherwise have to hard code those conditional appearances, costing a great deal of time and money, from both a financial and workload perspective. Amazon’s S3 fits our platforms storage needs, no problem; but it’s not designed for the dynamic manipulation of images that Cloudinary can so powerfully accomplish.”

## The Results: Seamless Creative Workflow for Easy and Efficient Portfolio Building

The user experience for photographers and videographers creating and adding to their portfolios is now entirely dynamic. The algorithms behind Cloudinary’s solution resize and optimize assets intelligently, and much more efficiently than a human could, whether community member or The Hub developer. “In terms of size, we’re able to get images and video to be a lot smaller and therefore more performant,” said Cole. “Not only that, but optimized assets are cheaper for us from a storage perspective, too.”

To get a truer picture of Cloudinary’s impact, Cole asked for feedback from one of his lead developers. This individual gave Cole the disclaimer that The Hub’s back-end developer is one of the most talented he’s ever worked with, before saying, “but I’m certain that Cloudinary will always outperform whatever he and our team could build from scratch.”

“When running a large piece of software, particularly one that is image heavy, you have two problems: storing terabytes of files, and then serving those terabytes of files in a variety of different forms, sizes and aspect ratios. Those two things are challenging and expensive in terms of developers’ time and bandwidth costs. Cloudinary is the elegant solution to that problem.” He went on to say, “Cloudinary reduces the file-size load of what we store on Amazon S3, and Cloudinary serves those assets dynamically and intelligently to our end user, the brand seeking a creative based on their portfolio.”

An efficient technology stack is important to today’s leading businesses. “With COVID-19 impacting business, everyone is tightening their belt,” Cole said. “We were already doing that beforehand in our aim to be a profitable company, and that meant a lot of streamlining of our tech stack. With a serverless stack, versus an infrastructure-heavy software, we use all third-party vendors to power the experience on our platform, with three or four of Amazon’s services being our mothership, so to speak. From a cost perspective, we’ve now reduced our use of third-party vendors for The Hub by 80%, but it was very apparent to us that we simply couldn’t cut Cloudinary. It’s far too valuable to lose.”

### About Cloudinary

Cloudinary’s end-to-end solution makes it easy to upload, store, manage, manipulate, and deliver images and videos, efficiently and effectively. Cloudinary has quickly become the de facto solution used by web and mobile application developers at major companies around the world to streamline image and video management and deliver an optimal end-user experience. Among Cloudinary users are Conde Nast, Bleacher Report, Forbes, Wired, TED, Under Armour, Lululemon, Whole Foods, and many others. For more information, visit [www.cloudinary.com](https://www.cloudinary.com) or follow on Twitter.