



Quest Educates Kingston University on Exchange and Active Directory Protection and Recovery, Delivering 89 Percent Savings in Staff Time

One of London's top universities, Kingston University serves more than 20,000 students and offers a full range of under- and postgraduate courses. It maintains a messaging environment with 4,500 staff e-mail accounts.

The Challenge

Each evening, Kingston University's information systems (IS) department performed a two-stage overnight backup of its Exchange servers, using NT Backup and IBM Total Storage Manager. This process worked well and was mostly problem-free. However, restoring even one staff mailbox when the user had accidentally deleted an e-mail was a different story. On average, it would take six hours to restore one mailbox and typically require support from three IS staff members. This was equivalent to about two and a half days of staff time. Restoring a mailbox would also involve bringing down the e-mail servers, preventing important communication about student accommodation, financial information and acceptance of student places, for instance.

In addition, there was no guarantee that the mailbox would recover fully. Whilst a mailbox restore was a rare request – usually no more than three per month – IS suspected that if the restore process was faster and more straightforward, there would be an increase in demand from the users. Eager to offer a better, more efficient service through reduced downtime, and more importantly, to protect its e-mail environment from loss, Kingston University's IS department went in search of a solution to meet those needs.

During its search, IS was also mindful of its need to protect its Active Directory (AD) environment, used by the university for Exchange and SharePoint authentication. Despite having a very stable AD environment, IS was concerned that recovering it in the event of failure would result in system downtime with no assurance of fully restoring all components, such as groups, permissions and all other attributes.

Kingston University estimated that even reinstating a user deleted in error would take about half a day. However, if a security group was lost, thousands of users would be affected, without access to core systems for at least a day. The university's worst-case scenario presented an even graver picture: what could happen if its AD environment was lost during the A' Level (UK high school exam) results period in August. "During this period, minutes are crucial as students are ringing the university every second to confirm their place," explained Mark Nicholls, technical consultant, Information Services, Kingston University. "If our course directors can't access the system, they can't confirm the place and the student goes elsewhere. With each student paying £3,000 per year to study, that presents a huge potential financial loss for the university."

In summary, Kingston University wanted a solution that would protect both its Exchange and AD environments from failure and loss, to prevent e-mail downtime and provide users with high system access and availability.

The Quest Solution

Initially, Kingston University's IS team sought an e-mail archiving solution and visited a storage trade show to learn about the products on the market. Quest Software was demonstrating its storage solutions at the event and when the IS team saw Recovery Manager for Exchange, it realised that this solution would meet the university's needs in full. "We must have come across at least 20 different products, but we were so impressed by Recovery Manager that we didn't even consider any other products," explained Nicholls.

"Recovery Manager for Exchange has dramatically reduced the time needed to restore a mailbox. Now it only requires one person around two hours, instead of 18 staff hours. That's an 89 percent time saving."

—Mark Nicholls
Technical Consultant
Kingston University

Kingston University London

Overview

Headquarters

Kingston, England

Services

Education

Critical Needs

A solution to protect Exchange and Active Directory environments from failure and loss, and prevent user downtime

Solution

Recovery Manager for Exchange and Recovery Manager for Active Directory

Results

- Delivered an 89 percent time-saving through faster mailbox recovery
- Reduced e-mail downtime, providing staff with a better e-mail service
- Eliminates hazards of Active Directory failure and subsequent downtime or object loss
- Reduces time to re-instate AD from hours down to minutes, helping to protect the university's income

Recovery Manager facilitates recovery of individual, message-level items, including e-mails, appointments, tasks, contacts, attachments and public folders. It can do so from regular Exchange backups and unmounted .edb information stores, without the need for a dedicated Exchange server. The result is not only faster recovery of critical data, but also lower costs.

Kingston University was particularly pleased with the time savings that Recovery Manager would bring, and its ability to restore a single item or mailbox direct from backup. Another factor was that its sister product, Recovery Manager for Active Directory, met the university's need to protect its AD environment.

Quest Recovery Manager for Active Directory is an easy-to-use solution for fast, granular, online recovery of AD in the event of inadvertent modification, such as software failure or human error.

Kingston University implemented Quest's Recovery Manager for Exchange and Recovery Manager for Active Directory solutions in May 2007.

The Bottom Line

Kingston University has saved time and IS team resources by using Quest's solutions. "Recovery Manager for Exchange has dramatically reduced the time needed to restore a mailbox," noted Nicholls. "Now it only requires one person around two hours, instead of 18 staff hours. That's an 89 percent time saving."

Keeping e-mail running whilst a mailbox is being recovered ensures that IS can provide a better service to the university staff. This also prevents any inconvenience to students as a result of delayed communication.

Recovery Manager for Active Directory provides Kingston University with the assurance of a protected AD environment in the event of a failure. "There is no guarantee that our extremely stable AD environment will not suffer a failure at some point," said Nicholls. "Quest's Recovery Manager for Active Directory is our safeguard against such a failure, ensuring that our users will not suffer any downtime and that all objects are protected."

In the event of AD failure, Recovery Manager for Active Directory will save Kingston University a considerable amount of time, and prevent lost revenue. "Recovery Manager ensures that we can have AD up and running following a failure, in minutes rather than hours," added Nicholls. "This could ultimately help the university to protect its income, by ensuring that our staff can stay in close contact with prospective students."

About Kingston University

With more than 20,000 students, Kingston University is the largest provider of higher education in South West London, offering an extensive range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The University is among the most successful in the United Kingdom – at the top of the table for student recruitment, renowned for teaching quality, a growing force in research and a pioneer in the launch of Foundation Degrees. In its most recent University league table, The Sunday Times highlighted Kingston's teaching quality, describing it as "one of the most successful modern universities with a teaching record that is the envy of many other institutions".

About Quest Software, Inc.

Quest Software, Inc. delivers innovative products that help organizations get more performance and productivity from their applications, databases and Windows infrastructure. Through a deep expertise in IT operations and a continued focus on what works best, Quest helps more than 50,000 customers worldwide meet higher expectations for enterprise IT. Quest Software can be found in offices around the globe and at www.quest.com.

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