

Performance and Progress

A Maryland county raises efficiency and creates opportunities with IT management software.

Howard County, Md., is known for a pleasant quality of life that blends the old and the new. Its county seat is Ellicott City, which is older than the United States. Nearby is Columbia, one of the original planned cities in the U.S. and just 45 years old. Ellicott City/Columbia was ranked #2 by *Money* magazine on its 2010 list of Best Places to Live.

additional workload, so they don't have to go from system to system in a very manual process to make sure everything is in place and is working," said Levy. "It helps us not only achieve more, but also to plan more effectively. And that certainly results in the IT department looking more credible when we're asking for budgets and spending, and it aligns our operations with our budgets."

done for appropriate reasons, internally? ChangeAuditor helps the county know the answers.

"With ChangeAuditor we know when permissions increase dramatically on certain accounts," said Levy. "So then we know which accounts may add more risk to the overall environment. When we see new administrative groups created, or new domain controllers added, or new enterprises put in place, we're able to have a sense from the overall environment of what needs to be assessed for vulnerability, where we need to start looking at more auditing, where we need to double-check — or sometimes to simply follow up with a phone call."

Smooth Operations

Quest Recovery Manager for Active Directory helps the county with disaster recovery. "It definitely allows us to know that if there is a catastrophic loss of Active Directory, from a user account perspective, that we're able to restore things very quickly," said Levy. "And it's easy to use. A few clicks and you're good to go."

The county also uses Quest's Password Manager and Spotlight on Active Directory Pack. Password Manager strengthens password policies and reduces help desk workloads by enabling end users to easily reset forgotten passwords. Spotlight on Active Directory Pack helps identify and resolve problems with a graphical representation of the IT environment. The county also depends on Spotlight on SQL Server Enterprise. "Our databases have grown in complexity and size, and the sheer number that we have," Levy said. "We use Spotlight on SQL Server Enterprise to make sure those databases are running and are fine-tuned, so we don't have delays, we don't have latency, we don't run out of space and the transaction logs are dealt with properly."



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No matter where they live within Howard County, citizens expect solid IT services from county government. That's why Howard County has invested in numerous tools from Quest Software. Most of these tools help the county manage Microsoft Active Directory (AD), others help it manage email, and still others assist with virtualization.

Ira Levy, CIO for the county, said the Quest tools raise the county's level of efficiency. "They allow my staff to take on

Many Tools, Many Benefits

The tools from Quest allow the county to automate many tasks related to AD, email and virtualization. "They allow us to automate portions of our monitoring and management of our systems," Levy said. By freeing up Levy's staff from operational tasks, Quest helps IT personnel get more productivity from the county's systems. "It allows us to enhance the systems we have," said Levy. "If we spent all our time working operationally, just trying to manage and monitor, we'd never have the opportunity to move things forward and to achieve progress."

The county Department of Technology and Communication Services has approximately 100 people on staff, serving about 3,500 users. While the size of the staff hasn't increased in recent years, the workload has. Levy points to the county's wide range of users and the number of systems as additional challenges. "The complexity of our environment is what the Quest tools help us manage," Levy said.

ChangeAuditor for Active Directory is one such tool. It makes it easy to tell why changes have been made. Was it an external, malicious attack? Or was it

Valuable Data

The county has also purchased Quest's ActiveRoles Server (ARS) and Access Manager, and will begin implementation soon. ARS provides out-of-the-box user and group account management for Active Directory identity administration, delegation and security, while Access Manager controls user and group access to resources. "We want to get the same things out of those as we get from the other Quest tools," said Levy. "We want to get information that helps us preemptively avoid problems. We want information that allows us to do auditing and analysis so we can become more efficient, or modify our policies if we need to."

Email tools include ChangeAuditor for Exchange, which tracks critical configuration and permission changes to Exchange, and Quest Archive Manager, which archives emails with advanced search tools for end users.

In 2009, the county used Quest GroupWise Migrator for Exchange for migrating from GroupWise to Exchange, and also Quest NDS Migrator to move from NDS to AD. "GroupWise Migrator for Exchange allowed us to remove a lot of manual work from moving accounts from one environment to another," said Levy. "It saves you a lot of time when you can really hit those big batches and use a tool to automate it."

The county is even using Quest tools to help it with virtualization. With 95 percent of its systems virtualized within its data center, the county sees virtualization as an important step in the creation of private clouds. "Quest vFoglight



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Ira Levy, CIO, Howard County, Maryland

allows us to, from a data center standpoint, look at our virtual machines, our storage, memory usage, and even our input/output load," said Levy. "It's resulted directly in us purchasing additional memory and storage prior to anything becoming a major problem. So we're able to preemptively deal with issues, before they affect some of our major systems."

New Opportunities

The creation of private clouds will give the county opportunities to partner with other clouds. In fact, the county believes that having the right tools can allow it to partner with all kinds of organizations, both in the public and private sectors, on applications and services.

"What we're finding is that when you pick certain standard tools — like those from Quest — you have new opportunities for partnering with others around those tools, particularly in government, where you can do public-private partnerships," said Levy. "When you do that, you're able to better leverage the systems you have in place. And that's where sometimes you find cost savings. You're doing more with what you've already invested in."

Howard County is moving forward with its technologies, and providing the best possible services for its citizens. That's why it uses Quest Software. "For us, it's a matter of what tools allow us to be able to focus our time on moving our systems forward, as opposed to just keeping track of them," Levy said.

The ease of use of the Quest tools is another helpful factor, Levy noted. "They're also well tested," he added. "They don't come with bugs and issues. They're mature products, and that is very meaningful if you want to manage systems that can have bugs or issues. You want to know that what you're using to monitor things is very reliable. And that's what we have with the Quest tools."

Quest Software

Quest Software simplifies and reduces the cost of managing IT for more than 100,000 customers worldwide. Our innovative solutions make solving the toughest IT management problems easier, enabling customers to save time and money across physical, virtual and cloud environments.

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