

La Jolla Country Day School

The Case Study

Discovering the Potential of Advanced BDR

The backup and disaster recovery tools of today have come a long way from yesterday's solutions—but many organizations are still limited by yesterday's tools. As their needs grow, many teams find themselves trying to protect and recover critical data with solutions that are too primitive to deliver the speed and efficiency they need.

Gabriel Gador, a Senior Network and Systems Engineer at La Jolla Country Day School, spent years “getting by” with such limitations. The school, which educates students from nursery school until college, had critical data to protect. “We have financial records, parent information, social security numbers, confidential student records,” Gador explained. “And we’re required to keep this data available and restorable.”

Yet as with many organizations, the school's data needs outpaced its BDR technology.

“Backups were always a challenge for a school like us,” Gador said, recalling the challenges of backing up physical servers. “For a very long time we made do with a product called Backup Exec—every version of it, even after they were acquired by Symantec. We backed up everything with tape, using a 12-14 tape jukebox.”

Pressure and Anxiety

It was a system that couldn't grow with their data needs. “Our tape backups had to run overnight—and no more than two could run simultaneously. I had 12 jobs running each night, staggering them as they got bigger and bigger and took up hours. I got tired of waking up to failed jobs every week. Nothing worse is than waking up and realizing I missed my window to get a backup of the Exchange server—and that someone needs a message restored from yesterday at five p.m. If the daily backup wasn't good, that person was out of luck.”

Gador found himself navigating a narrow margin of recoverability. One Friday he took a day off and went to the movies. He emerged to find a 911 text from his boss. “Someone had made a modification to the students records globally. The restore took hours, where another solution would have gotten us back up quickly.”

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The system's limitations caused considerable anxiety for the team, who were under pressure to keep all data protected and retrievable.

"While we don't have a lot of data to back up, what we do have is critical. We're asked to get back data that was accidentally purged or deleted and retain and retrieve data for court cases. We were constantly worrying about software, about the tape library becoming jammed or tapes getting worn out or overwritten. Even when we were rotating in fresh tapes, a critical backup could fail due to the age of the tape or a problem with a new tape."

Between protecting sensitive financial records and confidential information, Gador knew the team needed a more advanced BDR system. A move from on-premises Exchange to Office 365 mail lifted some of the burden. But the need for faster recovery and more efficient management convinced him to find something new.

Understanding the Potential of Next-Gen BDR

After many budget planning discussions, Gador received the funding to find a BDR solution that met his criteria.

"That meant I had to have the right criteria," he explained. "It was a real eye opener, going through all these products like Barracuda and Unitrends and hearing phrases like deduplication and other tech buzzwords. So I picked the brains of people I trusted and respected and built a list of BDR requirements—like features that could help me avoid running full backups every night."

Gador explored product demos from Quorum, Unitrends and Barracuda, an experience that expanded his list of requirements.

"It was surreal. I found out things I could do that I didn't even think existed. What put me over the top was Quorum Cloud—the ability to offload server copies to recovery cloud and DR. It was the first time I'd heard of DRaaS. So we sat down with a Quorum rep and discussed the possibilities and I was blown away."

His leadership had the same reaction, noting that Quorum met all their requirements for disaster recovery, fast backups, and a highly efficient system. "So we said let's go ahead and do the deal. And the rest is history."

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GABRIEL GADOR
Senior Network and Systems Engineer



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Performance and Integrity

Gador noted the Quorum deployment went very smoothly. “We ran test backup jobs on non-critical servers and saw how smooth that process went. We were up to speed in less than a week,” Gador recalls. “That could have been even shorter but I didn’t want to cutover backup jobs on a Friday. So I waited until Tuesday so I had the rest of the week in case something went wrong.”

Today the onQ appliance gives the La Jolla Country Day School team the peace of mind of knowing their backups are protected. The team actively backs up 18-20 Hyper V servers as well as a few physical servers. While the non-critical server jobs run once in the evening, some critical sequel servers and utility servers are backed up twice a day.

“The integrity of backups has to be good,” Gador said. “I never know when I have to restore the whole thing or get back some piece of data from the previous night.”

Speed has also been an asset. “Backup jobs are very quick. We’ve got a virtual machine that’s our de facto central storage server. What used to take five hours, now that’s a 90-minute job.”

onQ’s efficiency has helped the team handle its backup needs without any impact on performance. “The process is so lightweight, I’ve never had a problem with slowness. Before I’d backup the Exchange server and it would run into production hours and I’d have to decide between killing it and letting it slow everything down. Now I can put the backup in the background and have the same performance as if the backup wasn’t running.”

Finding the Complete BDR Answer

Gador realizes some IT teams are still trapped in his former challenges. He recommends they look for BDR offering a DR cloud option and robust support.

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“Those would be my requirements for another solution. You have to remember it’s not just the product and the issues it solves for you—tech support is important too. I’ve had other solutions where support is mediocre and it’s frustrating. But with Quorum support, I always speak to someone live. There’s no 30-minute wait. If I enter a non-critical ticket, I hear back in 24 hours. That doesn’t always happen with other vendors where you can wait 48-72 hours.”

“Quorum checks all those boxes for me,” he concluded. “With other solutions I can only check a few boxes. It’s a product for me that works. I can’t live without my onQ because it provides such a critical function—and it does that job damn well.”

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