

Texas Electric Cooperatives

The Case Study

Achieving Unified Backup and Disaster Recovery

A growing organization with over 200 employees and 64 co-op members, Texas Electric Cooperatives is the statewide association for electric cooperatives in Texas. Customers are both members and owners, filling multiple lines of business and association. The organization carries out a diverse mission, from lobbying the Texas Legislature to make sure laws stay in favor of cooperatives to putting out a monthly industry magazine to manufacturing and selling utility poles and supplies to members. While their headquarters is in Austin, the IT team also oversees a main datacenter in Georgetown and a manufacturing plant in Jasper, in addition to managing a variety of customer sites.

IT Director David Painter oversees a busy IT department that does more than manage technologies and daily workflows; they align their innovation with business initiatives and try to streamline efficiencies in an expanding organization. They also handle system to system integrations with customers and integrate orders and invoices with customers—what Painter calls “offering full service IT.”

After the team moved into a VMware environment, Painter began thinking about how they would back up the virtual servers. At the time, Texas Electric Cooperatives was using several backup and disaster recovery solutions, each handling a different piece of the puzzle. “But it was a headache,” Painter recalled. “We had too many vendors, so we wanted to pull it all together.

He began researching different BDR solutions, trying to find something that could boost reliability and reduce downtime. The solution also had to be efficient and easy to use, so the team could focus on new initiatives rather than spending time on manual tasks. Yet they had difficulty finding a single unified solution that could do everything they needed.

“We looked at different solutions and read their reviews and did their demos,” Painter said. “We noticed there were some good customer reviews for Quorum and they seemed to be the best fit for what we were trying to accomplish.” Painter and the team also noticed a difference in scope: “Other backup solutions did some stuff but not everything. Quorum seemed the most comprehensive.”

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A Single Solution for Security and Recovery

After making their decision, the team implemented Quorum at their Austin and Georgetown sites. “As soon as we signed and move forward, the Quorum team was readily accessible to walk through installation and setup. There was a hiccup in the Georgetown implementation getting our servers backed up, but no huge showstoppers.”

Right away the team noticed an improvement not only in their downtime challenges but also the ease and flexibility of the system. They discovered learning the appliance capabilities was vital: “I hired a new system admin and he spent some time with technical support and got up to speed and really liked the product.”

Painter explained, “The main feature that’s attractive is this: if our server or app dies, we can have HA and virtually no downtime. That’s the biggest piece that we like,” Painter said. He listed a few other features that were favorites of the team: “The fact that we can spin up the VM and run it in production is great. Offsite replication of data is another key component; being able to snapshot those servers and return to an earlier point in time. And finally, ease of use is a big factor.”

With cybersecurity being a top priority for the IT team, Painter and his staff focused on strengthening their security posture—something Quorum was able to assist with.

“Last December, we had a cybersecurity assessment done,” he said. “We hired an outside firm to come in and identify vulnerabilities. They suggested some changes; one of those involved unifying our entire backup and disaster recovery system. At the time we used Quorum for our virtual machines and Microsoft for physical boxes. As we tried to document all those different processes, we realized it would be easier and safer if our system was all under one roof.” Quorum was able to handle all of their backup and disaster recovery needs, something that boosted the organization’s protection.

When the team experienced some server outages, onQ was there to help, from support and guidance to using snapshots to rebuild a production server. “Our web server had a hardware failure. Our immediate reaction was to do a restore of a snapshot. We tried to run a VM in production until we could

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figure out what was wrong with the box. Although we had some problems at first, we got the right Quorum guy after hours who walked us through a bare metal restore.”

The second outage involved their domain controller. “We applied some Microsoft updates over the weekend that broke our DNS. What happened was I applied a patch to all DNS servers—so all the servers broke.” Painter spun up a VM and ran it in production until he could uninstall the patch.

A Foundation of Confidence

Today the Texas Electric Cooperatives team is expanding their DR strategy. While they currently use an offsite facility for disaster recovery, they’re planning on using Quorum cloud to backup both the Austin and Georgetown locations.

“We definitely recommend Quorum to others,” Painter said. “Not only are you getting DR taken care of but HA as well. In many cases those are different products—but with Quorum you can apply the solution to both of those.”

Painter shared his advice for new Quorum customers: “Make sure you fully understand the capabilities of this technology. We know how to drive the machine so that when it hits the fan, we can recover. That’s the neat part—the peace of mind.”

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