

Nat Sherman

The Case Study

Nat Sherman Won't Go Up in Smoke, Thanks to Quorum

Business Challenges: Threat of prolonged system downtime; managing multiple solutions for physical and virtual backup, recovery

Nat Sherman, Inc. was founded in 1930, has been family-guided for three generations and continues to define the authentic tobacco experience. Through a tradition of innovation and expertly crafted products, Nat Sherman's timeless appeal—while quintessentially New York—is embraced and enjoyed worldwide.

In its more than 80-year history, the famed cigar and cigarette retailer has weathered its fair share of disaster. In fact, when Director of MIS Lionel Legry joined the company 15 years ago, disaster came in the form of a system crash whenever someone bumped the lonely desktop in the hallway/computer room. But Superstorm Sandy was certainly among the worst the company had seen. "Our headquarters office in Fort Lee was dark for about a week," recalls Legry, who over the years has transformed Nat Sherman's IT environment into a high-tech, efficient system and now oversees a team of three.

"At first, we didn't know how long we'd be out—days or weeks. During that time, we relied on our manufacturing plant in North Carolina to manually perform day-to-day tasks. Once back up, everything had to be re-entered into the system. Luckily, we didn't lose anything."

But Sandy's chaos prompted some rethinking about the company's current backup and recovery approach. Nat Sherman was using Acronis for backup of its physical servers, but Legry found that recovery time was long. In addition, there was no hardware to restore data, applications and systems if something were to happen to the IT environment. Veeam was added when the company went virtual, but ultimately, managing multiple types of backup and recovery software turned out to be difficult and time-consuming.

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"We had a few issues with our backup and recovery approach, including frequent crashes and issues copying open files to the USB drive we used to store data offsite," said Legry. "And the recovery procedure was complicated: We had to read through detailed instructions in order to restore data. Who can concentrate on such detail in a stressful downtime situation?"

Legry found testing to be cumbersome as well. "I didn't have the time and infrastructure to restore many servers at once," he said, "so I could only test recovery of one component at a time. Recovery of the entire environment was practically impossible."

The Solution: Quorum's single-step DRaaS and HA solutions deliver reliable, uncomplicated business continuity; simplify testing

Legry outlined exactly what he wanted in a disaster recovery solution and set to work determining which solution could fit the bill. "I needed a solution that would automate most of the required tasks, and I needed support to handle the tasks that would not be automated," he began. "Really, all I want to do is look at a dashboard, check that all is well and move on with my day. I can't reserve entire days to do necessary software upgrades. I also needed a scalable solution that could grow with our business. Lastly, I needed a solution that would give me peace of mind. For this, I needed to be able to easily test it and have it monitored."

As this was a tall order, Legry took his time evaluating the options. He looked at Acronis for the SQL and virtual servers, as well as Veeam, Dell AppAssure, Double-Take®, Symantec BackupExec and Carbonite®. "I finally came across Quorum and found that it met my criteria," said Legry. "Now, all 12 of our servers are on Quorum. We have three HA appliances—one per location—and one DR appliance hosted in the cloud."

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LIONEL LEGRY
Director of MIS



The Impact: Quorum ensures peace of mind, higher level of productivity

With Nat Sherman safely in Quorum's hands for the past year, Legry enjoys peace of mind that when disaster hits, the company's data, applications and systems are safe. "I am definitely less stressed during storm season," he acknowledged. "I also feel I am more productive because I don't have to rerun my failed backups."

Legry also hailed Quorum's benefits when Nat Sherman moved more machines to virtual. "Because Quorum does a remarkable job restoring to dissimilar hardware and doing incremental restore, we used it to help us in our conversion from physical to virtual," said Legry. "Where regular conversion tools would have forced us to close our retail location during the conversion, Quorum gave us the power to make a partial restore to a cloned machine. The downtime was minimal."

Quorum's support also receives high marks from Legry. "I have a genuine feeling that Quorum wants to help my business and not just sell me a product. It is much easier to get good support when you call the same company for the software, hardware and monitoring.

"Quorum offered me a solution," Legry concludes, "not just a piece of software or hardware; not one module for physical machines, one module for virtual and another for the SQL database. Just one single and elegantly simple solution."

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Business Benefits of Quorum Solution

- One single-step solution for instant restoration of data, applications and systems
- On-demand and automatic testing
- Scalable and flexible