

Quantum DXi5500 Helps AIC Cut Daily Backup Window While Saving Money and Staff Time

Established in 1986, Canadian mutual fund company AIC Ltd. has \$4.5 billion in assets under management and is a recognized leader in value investing, where one of the key concepts is protecting one's principal. This focus on safety and security can also be seen in AIC's commitment to maintaining a strong backup and disaster recovery infrastructure. That's why the firm's IT staff was determined to take action when data growth began to strain their infrastructure and impact business operations.

"Overnight backups were stretching well into the next work day, the time to manage all that data was increasing, and the cost of so much tape storage had also become an issue," said Ben Barnes, AIC's Manager of Infrastructure Services.

By replacing its existing tape system with a Quantum DXi™ 5500 disk backup solution featuring data deduplication and replication technology, the company reduced the time required for daily backups by four to seven hours, drastically cut its tape storage costs, and significantly decreased the time IT staff spent managing backups and restores.

"We started to see the benefits of the Quantum DXi5500 right from day one," said Barnes. "This is a top-notch solution."

LONG BACKUPS BEGIN TO IMPACT BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY

Prior to deploying the DXi5500, AIC was conducting daily incremental and weekly full backups and storing the data on a Storage Tek L180 tape library. While this solution worked initially, it began to struggle as data growth rates increased to nearly 50 percent a year. The daily backup window, originally scheduled from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., had to be extended to start at 8 p.m., yet backups were often still running when people arrived for work in the morning. The situation was even worse when month-end backups fell on a business day.

"We had systems that were constantly running over the backup window and interfering with business activities during the day," said Barnes. "It was almost becoming part of the culture that on the last day of the month, people would expect email to be slow. These backup issues were damaging to the business in terms of productivity."

File and system restores were also problematical as tapes had to be obtained from an offsite facility and reloaded. Knowing the amount of data wasn't going to decrease, Barnes decided to investigate data deduplication technology.

"We wanted a well-proven technology provided by a well-established organization," said Barnes. "We were looking at performance and deduplication ratios, as well as how the solution would integrate with our existing systems. Ideally, we wanted to go with a vendor that could provide us an all-in-one solution."



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Manager of Infrastructure Services

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- Two Quantum DXi5500 systems
- Quantum Scalar 50 tape library
- Symantec NetBackup software

KEY BENEFITS

- Cut four to seven hours off the daily backup window
- Reduced backup volumes by 90% using deduplication
- Achieved significant savings, including more than 90% reduction in tape spending
- Eliminated delays of several hours waiting for restores
- Prevented system slow-downs during month-end backups
- Halved the time required for annual disaster recovery exercise

He looked at deduplication offerings from several vendors including Avamar and Data Domain, as well as Symantec's Pure Disk backup product. After careful evaluation, he determined that Quantum's DXi solution most closely matched AIC's needs.

QUANTUM'S CONSULTATIVE PROCESS MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Barnes said that Quantum differentiated itself from other vendors right from the beginning of the selection process.

"Quantum sat down with our team, listened to our problems, went through an exercise to fully understand our environment and the challenges we had, and came back with a proposal of how they could meet our needs," he said. "In the end, the whole experience with Quantum was delightful, particularly in terms of the attention and care given to making sure we had the right solution."

An initial AIC assessment determined that the company could get by with a smaller DXi3500 appliance. However, Quantum technicians highlighted the fact that the existing rate of storage growth would have led to it reaching capacity within a short period of time. As a result, Barnes decided to deploy two DXi5500 disk backup systems and replicate between them. For longer-term tape-based storage, he also purchased a Scalar 50 tape library.

"Quantum was very hands on and stayed with us through the whole process to implement the system," said Barnes. "As a result, we were able to hit all our timelines to get it up and running and functional in our environment."

EXTREMELY FAST BACKUPS AND SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS

AIC now backs up approximately 1.2TB of data daily and 2.5TB weekly to one DXi5500 at its main data center and then replicates the deduplicated data to the second DXi5500 at the disaster recovery site. The Scalar 50 tape library is deployed at the main data center and backs up the DXi5500 there.

Since deploying the DXi5500 solution, there has been a tremendous impact on both backups and restores.

"The Quantum DXi5500 is blazingly fast; night and day compared to what we had before," said Barnes. "Daily backups are now done four to seven hours faster than before."

Due to the significant improvement in performance, daily backups can now start at 10 p.m. again, and they finish by 5 a.m. Monthly backups no longer run the risk of bringing the Microsoft Exchange email server to a halt. Restores are done almost instantly from disk, with no need to wait several hours while tapes are located and loaded. Further, IT staff no longer has to spend time each morning involved with tape administration.

"We're seeing data reduction rates of 90 percent as a result of deduplication, which has far exceeded our expectations," reported Barnes. "We've also reduced our monthly tape costs by more than 90 percent, as we moved from sending 22 to 25 tapes offsite for every full backup to recently shipping just three tapes for a month-end backup."

AIC also discovered an unexpected benefit during an annual disaster recovery exercise. Previously, database administrators had to take turns activating restores of their systems, which could involve 12 to 13 hours of waiting time during an 18- or 19-hour period. Now the entire exercise is completed in less than 10 hours.

"We were looking for a partner, not just someone who would sell us a solution, but who would be there for us for the long run," said Barnes. "Having a vendor who will come in, make sure you really understand the technology, answer all your questions, and take the time to work out the right solution, puts Quantum in the category of a highly valued partner."

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ABOUT AIC

AIC Ltd. is a mutual funds company based in Burlington, Ontario, Canada. Since its founding in 1986, the company has grown to a 350 employee company managing \$4.5 billion in assets for its Canadian clientele.

ABOUT QUANTUM

Quantum Corp. (NYSE:QTM) is the leading global storage company specializing in backup, recovery and archive. Combining focused expertise, customer-driven innovation, and platform independence, Quantum provides a comprehensive range of disk, tape, media and software solutions supported by a world-class sales and service organization. This includes the DXi™-Series, the first disk backup solutions to extend the power of data deduplication and replication across the distributed enterprise. As a long-standing and trusted partner, the company works closely with a broad network of resellers, OEMs and other suppliers to meet customers' evolving data protection needs.

