

Adding Disk to Backup

Northeast Delta Dental is northern New England's premier dental benefits administrator, covering more than 650,000 people and processing more than 1.3 million claims per year. For Northeast Delta Dental's IT department, protecting and restoring data quickly is one of its most important jobs. When the backup team saw it couldn't restore files as quickly as their customers needed, they upgraded their backup system to make it faster, but also insisted on keeping their existing data protection protocols intact. The answer was a new backup system that combined a Quantum® Pathlight® VX disk backup solution with a Quantum Scalar® tape library.

RUNNING OUT OF TIME

The old Northeast Delta Dental system provided great protection—data was backed up and tapes were taken off-site every day as best practices would dictate—but the system had become fragmented and complex. “We never had time or resources to duplicate tapes, so when we had to restore a file—something we do several times a week—it was extremely slow,” explains Northeast Delta Dental's Manager of Networking and Technical Support, Dan Kaplan. “We had to get tapes returned from the off-site facility and re-load them to restore anything. It took hours, with significant manual intervention. There is also an expensive per-trip cost to recall tapes from the off-site facility.”

Northeast Delta Dental's IT department liked the idea of getting disk into their backup, but they absolutely demanded the security of off-site tape storage and wanted to decrease management time. They looked at using backup software and conventional ATA disk arrays as a backup target but rejected it. Kaplan said, “We realized it was going to be hard to share our storage resources and creating tapes was going to become even more difficult. We saw too many steps, too much scripting, too many points of failure, and too much extra management.”

DISK PROVIDES A SOLUTION

Instead, the IT department selected Quantum's Pathlight VX disk-to-tape backup solution, which they deployed with a Quantum Scalar 24 automated tape library. Pathlight VX is a disk backup solution that makes ATA disk arrays look like a tape library, so existing backup software can write easily to it. It also features an integrated path for creating physical tapes that can be exported for long-term storage. “Pathlight VX gives us disk backup advantages while keeping our tape-based security practices, and it has worked wonderfully”, Kaplan added. “We still use tape, but now the tapes are created in the background and don't use our backup servers and SAN—they can even be created outside the normal backup window.”



Northeast Delta Dental

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Manager of Networking and
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SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- 📍 Data Protection Site: Headquarters for Northeast Delta Dental
- 📍 Application: Backup and long term protection of primary corporate data
- 📍 Backup Application: Veritas BackupExec
- 📍 Disk Backup Tier: Quantum Pathlight VX 650 with 3.8TB disk capacity. Integrated connection to tape library.
- 📍 Tape Backup Tier: Quantum Scalar 24 tape library with LTO-2 drive and media

IMPROVED FILE RESTORE

Pathlight VX also provided an elegant way for Northeast Delta Dental to better meet its service level objectives. Every night the primary data is first backed up to the Pathlight VX disk, and then Pathlight VX creates copies of the volumes on physical tapes. The tapes are removed each day and secured in an off-site facility—just like before—but now the IT team keeps a copy of the files on disk for five days. That means that data recovery now takes place in a few minutes instead of several hours. “We find that almost all of our restore requests come within five days of data creation, so we have effectively stopped having to bring tapes back for recovery. The restore speeds of the Pathlight VX system are simply awe inspiring—much faster than we saw before from tape.”

If the IT team does need to bring tapes back for recovery, they can still do it. The tapes are written in the application’s native format, and they can be restored in a conventional library if necessary. The best thing is how simple and automated it all is—one process creates tapes for export as well as local copies for fast restores.

REDUCING COSTS AND MANAGEMENT TIME

Northeast Delta Dental appreciated the architectural help provided by the Quantum team. As pointed out by Northeast Delta Dental’s Vice President of Information Systems, Michael Bourbeau, “Quantum helped us look at our needs and came up with a solution that really makes our backup life easier and gives us better protection. We do less management, our overall costs have been reduced, and our administrators are able to help our customers solve other problems.”

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Vice President of Information Systems

ABOUT NORTHEAST DELTA DENTAL

Offering the largest dentist network in its three states, Northeast Delta Dental provides dental benefits to over 650,000 people in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The Company also extends its mission through its foundation, funding oral health initiatives in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

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Quantum Corp. 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. 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.