

CUSTOMER CASE

Bell Canada boosts cybersecurity with Quest Active Directory

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Bell, Canada's largest communications company, partnered with Quest Software to enhance its cybersecurity posture, specifically for Active Directory (AD) disaster recovery and change management. This collaboration significantly reduced AD recovery times, streamlined IT operations by automating manual tasks, and strengthened Bell's overall security by identifying and mitigating vulnerabilities.

As the largest communications company in Canada, Bell knows the importance of strong cybersecurity. However, with a primarily on-premises Active Directory (AD) environment with 105,000 user accounts and 30 additional domains, the IT team recognized the need for top-of-the-line cyber resilience solutions.

That's because Active Directory is more than just infrastructure for Bell — it runs the company's identity services, which are critical to its operations. As a result, the company wanted to move on from native tools and manual processes for AD auditing and recovery.



Region: Canada



Industry:
Telecommunications



Products:
Microsoft Platform Management, Enterprise Back-up and Recovery, Change Auditor for AD, Quest Change Auditor for Logon Activity, Quest Recovery Manager for AD

Achievements



Enhanced security posture and vulnerability mitigation



Eliminated the need for multiple teams to be involved in Active Directory recovery

Previously, IT staff had to parse cryptic logs and correlate disparate events, which was an ineffective way to spot suspicious activity in the IT ecosystem and respond to threats to AD security. Additionally, restoring just one domain controller requires meticulous coordination of numerous steps across multiple phases, and recovering an entire AD forest is an even more complex, time-consuming, and error-prone process.

Looking for a cybersecurity partner, Bell turned to [Quest Software](#) for its unmatched expertise in AD environments, comprehensive and integrated portfolio, and hands-on support teams. The company now relies on Quest solutions for both AD disaster recovery and change management.



Strengthening security posture with unified solutions

Bell's partnership with Quest Software began with disaster recovery. "The evaluation team said that the [Quest Active Directory recovery solution](#) was far superior to the other tools they researched," says Phillip Palha, Senior Manager for Active Directory Delivery at Bell. "The Quest AD recovery solution gives us the peace of mind that we can recover back to a specific point in time if there is a catastrophic failure. We know that if anything ever goes down, we can quickly bring everything right back to normal."

By automating many of the manual tasks in the process, the Quest AD recovery solution speeds recovery dramatically while ensuring that steps are completed in the correct order and without errors. In fact, a Total Economic Impact Study that Quest Software commissioned from Forrester found that the solution consistently reduced AD recovery time to just one to four hours. Without an AD recovery tool, recovery time was almost 100 times longer. Plus, the Quest solution can significantly reduce the risk of malware reinfection during the recovery process with the option to restore to a clean operating system.

Palha also lauds the Quest solution for simplifying the personnel requirements for AD recovery. "Bell enforces proper separation of duties as a business best practice," he notes. "As a result, with our old manual approach, multiple teams needed to be involved in recovery, which slowed the process significantly. With the Quest solution, we no longer have to reach out to the various storage and utility teams within Bell — my team can handle the entire recovery ourselves without outside assistance."

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Phillip Palha, Senior Manager for Active Directory Delivery | Bell

Thankfully, Bell has not actually needed to use the Quest solution to restore its AD forest. As Palha puts it, “The Quest AD recovery solution is more of a valuable insurance policy. We hope to never have to use it, but it’s there if we need it.”

Tracking logon activity to identify and close security gaps

The Bell IT team is always eager to learn about tools that help strengthen cybersecurity. When Quest Software presented Change Auditor, they quickly saw that it would be a valuable addition to the company’s security tool portfolio.

“With Change Auditor, we can easily see exactly what changes were made, who made each change, where the change came from, and the previous and new values. Moreover, it enables us to quickly revert unwanted changes, and even to protect critical objects from being modified in the first place,” Palha explains. “It is a fantastic tool that we’ve leveraged quite a bit already. It has enabled us to identify and mitigate a lot of vulnerabilities that we might not have uncovered without it.”

He recalls several occasions when the corporate security team noticed unusual activity and asked his team to investigate. “With Change Auditor, we were able to quickly check for any suspicious changes made during the timeframe indicated by the security team,” he says. “For example, Change Auditor enabled us to identify GPOs that were no longer needed and delete them to reduce our attack surface area.”



The Logon Activity module of Change Auditor has also proven invaluable to Bell. The tool allows the team to track and eliminate antiquated protocols that are logging into its AD systems. “In particular, we leveraged it to identify use of the NTLM v1 authentication protocol, which is far less secure than NTLM v2,” Palha explains. “As a result, we were able to strengthen security by eliminating use of the weaker protocol across our IT infrastructure. We also use it to track use of the insecure RC4 protocol and TLM and TLS connections.”

Proven solutions for long-term success

Bell values its partnership with Quest Software for a range of reasons beyond the effectiveness of the solutions the company currently uses. “The support has been fantastic, including detailed information about product functionality,” Palha says. “Moreover, unlike other vendors, Quest Software is constantly improving its solutions rather than staying stagnant.”

Plus, Quest Software offers a comprehensive portfolio of solutions that enable customers to keep strengthening their security. Bell is especially interested in SpecterOps BloodHound Enterprise for its ability to map out attack paths in Active Directory and pinpoint the choke points to mitigate and shut them down.

In fact, Bell is frequently approached by other vendors, so Phil has had lots of opportunities to compare other tools with the Quest solutions. “When you’re the largest telecom in Canada, everybody knocks on your door,” he says. “But no other vendor has been able to offer us anything nearly as good as what we have with Quest Software. When other vendors claim they could serve us better, we just chuckle and think, ‘Yeah, good luck with that.’”



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Bell is Canada's largest communications company, leading the way in broadband and media innovation. With significant infrastructure investments in its world-class fibre and wireless networks, Bell delivers innovative communications technologies to best serve Canadian consumers and businesses.

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