

Health system improves care with seamless AD migration

Avera Health consolidates four AD forests into one with zero user impact and no data loss, achieving a 99 percent success rate while saving \$50,000, using Quest® migration solutions.



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*Curtis Mavity
Senior Systems Engineer, Avera Health*

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Avera

Company Avera Health
Industry Healthcare
Country United States
Employees 16,000
Website avera.org

BUSINESS NEED

To simplify access to critical resources for medical staff, improve security and reduce IT overhead, Avera Health needed to consolidate its four Active Directory (AD) forests into one. Given the size and complexity of the environment — 13 different domains and more than 20,000 accounts — and the absolute need to avoid any impact on patient care, Avera was keen to find the best migration solution.

SOLUTION

With Quest® Migration Manager for Active Directory, Avera was able to complete its migration nearly twice as fast as expected, and with zero impact on end users and zero data loss. The accurate, automated migration solution saved the organization an estimated \$50,000 over manual processes, delivering immediate ROI.

BENEFITS

- Ensured a zero-impact migration with no data loss
- Enabled an astonishing 99 percent success rate, calculated based on migration size and number of support calls
- Delivered immediate ROI, saving an estimated \$50,000 by automating complex processes
- Slashed the migration timeline by 42 percent

SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE

- [Microsoft platform management](#)

The system downtime and user disruptions a migration can involve are costly for any organization. But for healthcare providers, the stakes are even higher — lives are on the line. Doctors, nurses and the teams supporting them simply have to be able to access the applications and data they need, when they need them. So when Avera Health needed to consolidate its four AD forests, it turned to its trusted partner, Quest Software, for a truly zero-impact solution.

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Senior Systems Engineer, Avera Health*

Avera Health is a leading healthcare system that serves a population of nearly one million people in the midwestern United States. Avera comprises more than 330 locations, including hospitals, primary and specialty care clinics, senior living facilities, home care and hospice services, sports and wellness facilities, and home medical equipment outlets — and also offers innovative telemedicine services.

HAVING MULTIPLE AD FORESTS DRIVES UP COSTS AND MANAGEMENT OVERHEAD

The name “Avera” is derived from a Latin term meaning “to be well.” And while that name aptly describes the organization’s mission of service to the communities it serves, it did not apply so neatly to the organization’s IT infrastructure. Avera had four separate Active Directory forests, with a total of 13 different domains and more than 20,000 user accounts. This complexity drove up both costs and personnel requirements.

“With three forests that were external from our primary domain, we had three separate IT departments, three separate help desks, three separate everything,” explains Curtis Mavity, senior systems engineer at Avera Health. “That structure increased both complexity and costs. For example, consider account management: If a user had to transfer from one medical facility to another, and those facilities were in different AD environments, we had to disable their old account and then create a new one, making sure to give the user all the same permissions. To reduce costs and IT workload, we needed to simplify provisioning, standardize purchasing avenues for hardware and software, and rein in non-standard equipment.”

IT COMPLEXITY MAKES CRITICAL TASKS MORE DIFFICULT FOR USERS AND IT ALIKE

But for an organization laser-focused on delivering quality care to patients, the IT challenges caused by the complex AD structure paled in comparison to the user impact. “Everyone — from doctors and nurses to the business office — had to sign into multiple accounts all the time, whether it was to get patient information, fulfill a prescription or send an order. Since we simply won’t compromise when it comes delivering the best patient care, the IT complexity made their jobs more difficult and stressful,” Mavity notes. “Moreover, we have hundreds of applications across our environment, and it was a struggle to ensure each user had access to everything they needed. We had to find workarounds to get some applications that weren’t in our primary domain to work so that users could do their jobs.”

Similarly, managing security across four separate AD forest environments was a nightmare for IT. “We wanted to bring everyone into one centralized domain where we could establish and maintain one set of security policies for the entire organization,” Mavity said. “That way, we would be able to protect sensitive infor-

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

SOFTWARE

Migration Manager for Active Directory

Migration Manager for Exchange

Foglight

mation, such as patient records, with far less effort.”

A POWERFUL MIGRATION SOLUTION FROM A TRUSTED PARTNER

With such a large and complex Active Directory ecosystem to consolidate, Avera Health knew it needed the best Active Directory migration solution available so it could avoid any impact on users and patients. Mavity had used some Quest tools previously, including Migration Manager for Active Directory, Migration Manager for Exchange and Foglight®, and Avera already had a strong relationship with Quest. Nevertheless, the IT team was careful to exercise due diligence: They evaluated a range of options, including not just Quest Migration Manager for Active Directory, but also native tools and solutions from other third-party vendors.

After thorough investigation, the team chose Quest, citing both the solution’s feature set and their broader confidence in the company. “The scalability of Migration Manager for Active Directory was definitely the biggest factor in our decision; we needed a scalable solution that could handle the large number of accounts we had,” recalls Mavity. “But we also had had success with Quest in other areas in the past, and we were comfortable and confident about what their products can do.”

SLASHING THE MIGRATION TIMELINE BY MORE THAN 42 PERCENT

Coming up to speed with Migration Manager for Active Directory was easy for the team at Avera Health. “It’s very well laid out and easy to use,” says Mavity. “Plus, the Quest support site, the knowledge base and the community that Quest has built made it easy for me to learn the process and get the first test migrations done.”

After the pilot migrations, the team was quickly off and running. “We migrated over 8,000 users, 2,500 AD groups and more than 4,000 PCs from three forests with 13 child domains into our target forest in one domain,” says Mavity. “We had projected that the migration project would take 14 months, but with Migration Manager for

Active Directory, we were able to shave six months off that timeline. We would have been done even sooner, but there were conflicts with available staff during the holiday months.”

Perhaps the biggest challenge was not technical but interpersonal: convincing each new group of users that the migration process would be easy and painless. “Every time we would schedule a migration, it would go so well that we’d do twice as many users the next night and the next, so we’d finish that part of the migration ahead of schedule,” explains Mavity. “But then we’d move on to the next phase of the migration, and we’d have to start slow again with the next group of users. For instance, we’d have to migrate only 50 users in the first pass to show them how easy it was, and then we could kick it up to 600 again.”

A SEAMLESS MIGRATION PROTECTS END USERS AND PATIENTS ALIKE

Of course, just getting the migration done quickly isn’t enough for any organization, especially when lives are at stake; the migration also needs to be painless for end users. And that’s exactly what Avera Health achieved with Migration Manager for Active Directory, “Everything had to be seamless for us because the well-being of patients is on the line,” says Mavity. “Quest enabled us to meet that goal with our migration. Just as promised, the migration had zero impact on our users — really zero. We couldn’t have asked for it to go any better.”

In fact, the migration was so seamless that it often took some work to convince users it had even taken place. “After the migration, we had end users tell us that, other than their computer restarting, they didn’t notice a difference at all. They’d say, ‘I can still get into my applications, I can still get into my folders, I can still get into my email, everything just works,’” Mavity recalls. “We even had people question whether anything was done because they didn’t notice any difference. That’s definitely zero impact. We would actually have to point out the new domain name on the login screen, and they’d say, ‘Oh, you just changed the wording on my screen.’ And we’d laugh to ourselves and say, ‘Yes, we just changed the word.’”

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Delivering such a successful migration earned the IT team positive feedback from upper management as well. “The leadership team was pleased with the results of the migration being seamless, under budget and faster than the projected timeframe,” says Mavity. “They didn’t need to get involved because nobody was disrupted by it, and that’s always a good thing.”

A “MIND-BLOWING” SUCCESS RATE OF 99 PERCENT

Mavity took the time to calculate the success rate of the migration — and he was astonished by the result. “I added up the number of users and computers that we migrated and divided by the number of issues that were reported,” he explains. “If we’d had a 90 percent success rate, that would have been good, but we achieved 99 percent! That is just outstanding and really hard to believe. And some of the calls weren’t even related to the Quest software at all; they were forgotten logins. So it’s almost mind-blowing how successful our migration was. We had zero user impact and zero data loss. The Quest migration tool just works.”

AN ESTIMATED COST SAVINGS OF \$50,000

Although Avera Health is primarily focused on patient care, it must also be concerned about costs. Mavity estimates that automating the migration with Migration Manager for Active Directory saved the organization \$50,000. “It’s amazing to me to think about doing a migration without Quest. Imagine having to migrate thou-

sands of computers manually and create each user one at a time instead of copying them over,” he says. “We estimate that we saved \$50,000 by using the Quest tool, and we definitely achieved immediate ROI. We didn’t have to bring in third-party or temporary staff to help complete any of the migration operations, and the help-desk staff were able to continue with their normal tasks without being interrupted by all the calls that would otherwise have been generated by the migration.”

And the time and cost savings continue, thanks to the successful migration. “It’s hard to quantify exactly how much time and money we were spending before to manage four separate forests, and how much it cost to have users logging in to different systems multiple times every day,” acknowledges Mavity. “But we know that having just one environment is providing huge savings every day, so the ROI continues to grow.”

ABOUT QUEST

Quest helps our customers reduce tedious administration tasks so they can focus on the innovation necessary for their businesses to grow. Quest® solutions are scalable, affordable and simple to use, and they deliver unmatched efficiency and productivity. Combined with Quest’s invitation to the global community to be a part of its innovation, as well as our firm commitment to ensuring customer satisfaction, Quest will continue to accelerate the delivery of the most comprehensive solutions for Azure cloud management, SaaS, security, workforce mobility and data-driven insight.

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