



Education company gains enterprise-level data protection

GEMS Education protects its educational mission with fast, reliable backups and quick recovery while reducing IT backup work by 90 percent and storage needs by 40 percent with Quest AppAssure.



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Ashley Scammell, U.K. IT Manager,
GEMS Education Global

CUSTOMER PROFILE



Company	GEMS Education
Industry	Education
Country	United Kingdom
Employees	10,000 (800 U.K.)
Website	gemseducation.com

BUSINESS NEED

To safeguard its educational mission and reduce IT workload, GEMS Education needed to upgrade its unreliable and time-consuming backup and recovery solutions.

SOLUTION

After rigorous testing and assessment, GEMS Education chose Quest AppAssure for its enterprise-quality data protection. Reliable, efficient backups reduce IT backup work by 90 percent and storage needs by 40 percent. Teachers and students alike have the files they need with fast, granular recovery.

BENEFITS

- Protected data with efficient, reliable backups that slashed IT backup work by 90 percent
- Enhanced education by enabling quick recovery of accidentally deleted files for teachers and students
- Reduced storage use by 40 percent, even with data growth and longer storage requirements
- Protected the organization with effective disaster recovery
- Delivered the most complete and cost-effective data protection of all vendors tested

SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE

- **Backup and Recovery.**

Founded in Dubai in 1959 as a family tutoring business, GEMS Education now prepares 142,000 students in 151 countries for the rigors of higher learning and equips them with the skills and versatility they require for professional employment. To protect its rapidly growing organization, the U.K./European division of GEMS Education replaced its unreliable backup and recovery solution with enterprise-class data protection from Quest.

AN ENTERPRISE-CLASS IT INFRASTRUCTURE WITHOUT ENTERPRISE-CLASS DATA PROTECTION

GEMS Education recognizes the critical value technology brings to education, both in the foreground, as tools used directly by teachers, students and staff, and in the background, quietly delivering the services the organization relies upon every day. In the United Kingdom and Europe, a team of just nine IT professionals manages an extensive IT infrastructure with 30 physical servers, 56 virtual machines (VMs) running Microsoft Hyper V, and 15 SQL Servers that house 7TB of data — much of it mission-critical.

“Each of our schools has a student management information system (MIS) with its own separate database, and we also have a Sage accounting system,” explains Ashley Scammell, U.K. IT manager, GEMS Education. “Those systems are the most critical for us to protect and recover quickly. Other important systems include the help desk and many student-based testing applications that record data in SQL databases.”

However, that enterprise IT infrastructure lacked enterprise data protection. Instead, the backup and recovery solution dated back many years and consisted of network-attached storage (NAS) units and freeware software. “The system may have worked well when it was first deployed, but as our data grew, a single backup would take up

75 percent of the drive, so incremental backups often failed with no errors or warning,” recalls Scammell. “Since there was no reporting, we might not even realize that nothing had been backed up for weeks.”

This unreliable, cumbersome system was hurting productivity across the organization. “IT staff were spending hours every week just managing backups,” Scammell reports. “More important, recovery of data was slow — when it was possible at all. Since the NAS units were unable to hold more than a single backup, if we were not told about an issue within a day, we were unable to help because the backup would have been overwritten.”

RELIABLE, EFFECTIVE BACKUP AND RECOVERY IS MISSION-CRITICAL

GEMS Education recognized that the situation was not merely an inconvenience for IT, teachers and students, but a threat to the school’s reputation and its very mission. A relatively small disaster illustrated the risk all too clearly. “One teacher accidentally brought in the Crypto virus, which locked every file in a folder containing several years of student reports,” explains

“We tried solutions from all the main providers, including Barracuda, EMC, Unitrends and Veeam, but we found that AppAssure did everything that we wanted it to do, at a price that beat all the rest.”

*Ashley Scammell
U.K. IT Manager
GEMS Education Global*

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

SOFTWARE

Quest AppAssure

Scammell. “Since it took 48–72 hours for the problem to be reported to us, we had no good backups available, so some data was lost.

“If there had been a major issue, we would have had to work with the backups at whatever phase they had last succeeded, trying to recover whatever we could,” Scammell continues. “Financial data could be lost, or student exam results could be affected through course work being unavailable to exam invigilators. And for server recovery, we would have been forced to reinstall from disk.”

A COMPREHENSIVE YET COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTION

GEMS Education knew it was time to head in a different direction. Scammell and his staff began looking for an enterprise solution it could count on, not only for backup and recovery, but for disaster recovery as well. “We needed to know that backups are going to work, and that the system would alert us if one failed,” notes Scammell. “And we also started thinking about storing those backups offsite to get true disaster recovery in place.”

GEMS Education evaluated several data protection solutions, and a threemonth trial yielded a clear winner: Quest AppAssure.

“We tried solutions from all the main providers, including Barracuda, EMC, Unitrends and VEEAM, but we found that Quest AppAssure did everything that we wanted it to do, at a price that beat all the rest,” says Scammell. “It literally ticked every box, delivering every feature we had seen and liked in the other products. AppAssure gave us a better solution than we could have expected for the price.”

REDUCING IT WORKLOAD BY 90 PERCENT AND STORAGE NEEDS BY 40 PERCENT

With AppAssure, GEMS Education now has the enterprise-class data protection it needs. Backup and recovery are so easy and reliable that the time IT staff must spend monitoring and restoring backups has dropped by 90 percent.

And thanks to AppAssure’s effective compression and deduplication, GEMS Education has been able to reduce storage requirements even as student enrolment soars. “We have been able to reduce our total storage space by 40 percent while increasing the length of time that data is held for — even though the student population has grown tremendously,” reports Scammell. “In fact, one or two of our schools have doubled our anticipated growth figures, but with AppAssure reducing our storage needs, we haven’t had to panic and purchase more storage for backups.”

EXCEEDING USERS’ EXPECTATIONS WITH EASY GRANULAR RECOVERY

With AppAssure’s reliable backups and quick granular recovery, IT is now the enabler of education that the organization needs it to be. “People delete things and overwrite files, and with our old system we often couldn’t recover what our staff and students needed,” notes Scammell. “With AppAssure, most restores take just a few minutes — in most cases, it takes longer to find the file to restore than it does to restore it. But we can do more than that: we can show the user all the versions of the file we have in backups and let them choose the one they want, or even give them multiple versions if they’re not sure or if they need to merge edits from several files. Word has gone round among teachers and students, and we’ve built up their confidence in the ability of IT to give them more than they ever expected.”

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U.K. IT Manager
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EXCEEDING THE COMPANY'S EXPECTATIONS

AppAssure has also exceeded GEMS Education's expectations for a data protection solution by delivering not only the quality backup and recovery it knew it needed, but replication and disaster recovery as well. "AppAssure didn't just solve our problems — it solved problems that we hadn't even known we had," says Scammell. "Because we'd had such a poor system before, we were focused on fixing its problems and getting reliable backups and faster restores. But AppAssure includes other features that had not yet come into our field of vision, like deduplication and replication — requirements that we would have come across in three months or six months or a year from now."

In fact, GEMS Education is still exploring all the functionality of AppAssure and

discovering additional features that add to its value. "We keep getting more and more out of it," Scammell says. "AppAssure has given us options for implementing a better solution than we thought we could afford."

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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