

# Quest Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition

## Abstract

Building on their innovative suite of application, database, and Microsoft Windows management and productivity enhancement tools, Quest Software is extending its Microsoft Active Directory (AD) support offering by releasing Recovery Manager Forest Edition as an extension option for their existing Recovery Manager for Active Directory product. While Quest is a leader in the AD management space with a large client base and a mature suite of AD administration tools, determining when an external management or support product like Recovery Manager Forest Edition is appropriate for a particular business environment is often a difficult decision. This brief examines the capabilities of Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition, its advantages compared to the natively available AD recovery tools from Microsoft, and scenarios/environments where utilizing Recovery Manager Forest Edition provides the highest customer value.

## Product Overview

Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition leverages and extends the functionality of Quest's Recovery Manager for Active Directory product to include automated and intelligent restoration capabilities for an entire AD forest. In the event of a major AD failure (irreversible database corruption, unwanted schema extension, virus attack, etc.), Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition simplifies and accelerates the AD recovery process so that critical business operations suffer minimal delay. Recovery Manager Forest Edition provides full automation of forest recovery tasks from a single control console. Key features include selection of point-in-time (unaffected) backups for all domains, progress tracking of domain controllers (DC) restorations, quarantine of corrupt DCs (preventing their replication with the newly restored environment), and simultaneous restoration of all DCs in the forest to enable the fastest possible recovery.

Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition is an add-on that requires Recovery Manager for Active Directory 7.6.0 or higher. The official release date of Recovery Manager Forest Edition is March 29, 2007. Quest employs a user-based pricing model for both products. Recovery Manager is offered at \$10/user and the Forest Edition add-on costs an additional \$10/user.

## Application Areas

Microsoft Active Directory (AD) is a central component of the Windows server platform. It provides the capability to not

only store information related to network enterprise users and resources, but to manage (service) them as well. Active Directory provides consolidated control and management capabilities for all network resources across the enterprise through sophisticated processes and tools, including multiple domain databases with automated replication, advanced communications, and a customizable enterprise-wide hierarchical architecture. Businesses rely on AD to create, provision, manage, and control all network resources including users, groups, PCs, servers, printers, security authentication policies, applications, and a variety of other functions across the enterprise.

Despite its critical role, advanced features, and embedded protection mechanisms, AD is not immune to errors. Directory services can become damaged, corrupt, or completely disabled for numerous reasons. A frequent cause of AD problems is administrator errors including accidental deletion or modification of objects, and unexpected consequences of script execution. Hardware and software failures, viruses, errant schema extensions, file corruption, and malicious activity can cause even more damaging AD issues often requiring a complete recovery of the entire AD forest.

When serious AD errors occur, the impact to business operations can be devastating. Business-critical applications can cease to function along with domain resource management capabilities, domain replication, security administration, and user access to key resources including storage, print, and network services. Recovering from significant AD errors using the tools and utilities provided by Microsoft (AD Sites and Services, AD Users and Computers, Ntdsutl, Netdom, DCpromo, etc.) is a complex and manual process requiring highly skilled resources with a deep understanding of AD architecture, services, administration, and the numerous Microsoft provided command line utilities. To compound the problem, delayed action and/or user error during the recovery process can cause further AD damage and productivity loss.

Quest Recovery Manager for Active Directory offers extensive AD backup capabilities including scheduling, automation, differential backups, and support for AD backups created with native and third-party AD backup applications. It also provides AD comparison reporting and online granular restore of AD and ADAM attributes. Recovery Manager for Active Directory is ideally suited to recover quickly from 'everyday' minor AD issues including recovery from accidental deletions, or modifications of Group Policy Objects (GPOs), or Organizational Units (OUs). The Forest Edition add-on extends the Recovery Manager toolset and includes a single control console for

managing an entire AD forest recovery effort via automated utilities including remote quarantine and simultaneous system recovery features.

## Key Ramifications

Recovery Manager for Active Directory w/ the Forest Edition extension provides a complete backup and recovery solution for both simple and complex enterprise Active Directory implementations. Key capabilities and features of the Forest Edition extension include:

- Automation of all necessary tasks to facilitate a successful recovery, which expedites the recovery process, reduces the potential for user errors, and eliminates the need to learn complex Microsoft command line utilities.
- Single console for managing the recovery effort including DC selection, progress tracking, and remote, simultaneous restore of all DCs in the forest.
- Backup selection capabilities to ensure a consistent, unaffected set of backups are chosen for all domains.
- Assurance that all affected copies of AD are quarantined, so the corruption cannot propagate to the new environment.

In today's global environment, highly available applications and infrastructures are becoming the norm. When outages occur, businesses must respond quickly and correctly in order to maintain their competitive edge. CIOs, VPs, and other C-level officers focused on customer satisfaction, productivity, and profitability, must arm their Data Center, Departmental Managers, and IT Administrators with the tools, training, and processes required to support the company's mission. Departmental Managers (with responsibility for business-critical application availability and access to key resources across the network) and IT Administrators (with responsibility for infrastructure availability and operations) can leverage tools like Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition to facilitate disaster recovery. These tools also reduce stressful and time-consuming "firefighting" activities, improve their productivity, and enable them to focus more effort on planned strategic initiatives.

## EMA's Perspective

Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition provides an excellent solution to a significant need. As the core component of the Windows network environment, AD recovery should be given strong consideration either as a stand-alone business risk or as part of the overall disaster recovery and business continuity planning process. Depending on the environment, up-time requirements, outage costs, technical

skills, and overall business risk tolerance, Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition can provide a positive ROI on just a single negative AD event. Even if an AD disaster never occurs, it strengthens ability to meet Service Level Agreement requirements and allows IT staff to focus on strategic tasks.

Recovery Manager for Active Directory Forest Edition fills a sometimes overlooked, but critical need. Primary competitors include Symantec's BackupExec and NetPro's RestoreADmin, but neither provides the comprehensive and automated forest recovery features of Recovery Manager for AD Forest Edition. This product release is a strong offering for Quest. Adding enterprise level recovery capabilities to an already formidable AD backup/recovery product bolsters their mature solution suite and technical leadership position within the industry.

The base Recovery Manager product is very suitable for all manner of enterprises, from mid-market up, especially in areas where availability requirements are most demanding and risk tolerance is low. The Forest Edition add-on provides the most value for larger or more geographically dispersed enterprises. Forest deployment is a limiting factor, and these environments are where the impacts of failure will be felt most.

Like insurance, Recovery Manager for AD Forest Edition is a product you will hopefully never need to use. Some organizations may never realize the dollar value ROI; however, risk is unpredictable and must be planned for. The Quest solution is a very appropriate risk management option, especially in larger environments and risk-averse organizations. In those instances, the solution is invaluable and well worth the outlay – especially if the worst does happen.