

AMEREN

FILE AREA
NETWORK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technology Challenge:

Consolidate data infrastructure and centralize data management for lower costs, greater efficiency, higher reliability, and easier maintenance

Solution:

A data migration, backup, and recovery solution leveraging Brocade® StorageX®

Benefits:

- Saved more than \$1.2 million in annual capital, operational, and maintenance expenses
- Reduced disaster recovery time from 40 hours to just five minutes
- Standardized on one operating system instead of two, eliminating licensing fees
- Eliminated maintenance and supervision of data backup and recovery at remote sites

For utility customers throughout Illinois and Missouri, the 1997 merger of Union Electric and the Central Illinois Public Service Company (CIPSCO) into Ameren Corporation signaled a new era of service. Almost a decade later, Ameren is reliably serving over three million electric and natural gas customers with substantially lower rates than the national average.

Fueled by its business success, Ameren has continued to acquire other utility companies, adding numerous subsidiaries, remote offices, and data centers. However, a consequence of this growth has been the increased cost and management complexity of expanding the technology infrastructure to support 9,100 employees at over 50 regional offices.

**THE NEED FOR GREATER FILE
MANAGEMENT EFFICIENCY**

In particular, certain infrastructure-related issues had become an increasing burden for the company. For instance, if a server outage occurred at any location, it impacted the employees' ability to perform even the most basic office routines. In some cases, remote employees had to wait more than a day for support staff to travel from Ameren headquarters to restore the server. In turn,

that meant putting other IT projects on hold and potentially impacting customer service.

To achieve faster and more reliable file access, the company decided to migrate its Novell NetWare platforms to Microsoft Windows 2003 servers at the remote sites. To do so, Ameren deployed Microsoft Distributed File System (DFS), which enabled files in multiple locations to be logically grouped for more reliable data access.

However, the solution lacked the full capabilities to support the firm's many locations. "To accomplish this migration, we needed to enhance DFS with a namespace strategy that would permit us to logically map servers throughout our enterprise," explains Craig Yale, Infrastructure Specialist III, Ameren.

**LEVERAGING MICROSOFT DFS
WITH BROCADE SOLUTIONS**

After researching the marketplace, Ameren selected Brocade StorageX, a solution that extends the capabilities of DFS by using its Global Namespace functionality to maintain the same logical paths to servers while consolidating physical devices. Using this solution, Ameren unified and virtualized file data stored throughout its enterprise.

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As a result, the company quickly consolidated servers in its 50 remote sites down to 37—with the migration process transparent to users. The solution also automated many processes, greatly reducing the time required to back up and move files between locations.

Because the Brocade StorageX Global Namespace functionality enables users to routinely access distributed files without knowing their actual location, Ameren employees continue to see the same single drive letter and file structure they viewed before the change. “That capability was crucial,” says Rob Fix, an Ameren Infrastructure Specialist III. “It enabled us to rapidly migrate five terabytes of file data from Novell to Windows with limited downtime to our employees.”

CENTRALIZED ENTERPRISE BACKUPS FOR GREATER ECONOMY

Ameren soon discovered that Brocade StorageX offered additional value. After the consolidation, the company implemented a more effective remote site data management strategy by logically mapping remote devices to servers at its St. Louis data center. By centrally backing up business-critical information using the Brocade solution, Ameren was able to discontinue the tape systems at its remote sites, saving the company \$291,000 per year.

“With our enterprise data backed up at our data center, a single engineer can manage the entire process—whereas before, we needed IT professionals at each site to supervise tape backups,” Yale says. “By eliminating all the time our staff needed

for remote site visits, we’re accomplishing in minutes what once took many hours and dollars to do.”

Leveraging the solution’s disaster recovery policies, Ameren has improved its business continuity strategy by centralizing the failover process—making it easy to reroute servers and restore backup files in case a server fails. To test the failover response, Fix and Yale ran a series of simulations. “Restoration took five minutes, as opposed to the 40 hours plus it did before,” Yale states.

OVER A MILLION DOLLARS IN SAVINGS

With Brocade StorageX, Ameren now has a powerful solution to keep the company’s data infrastructure running smoothly. And with the much faster recovery capabilities, Ameren can count on consistently high employee productivity, prompt customer service, and continuous access to critical data. At the time of the migration and consolidation, Gartner was estimating the annual cost of managing a server at \$18,000. To date, Brocade StorageX has saved Ameren more than \$1.2 million by eliminating a variety of equipment, software, operations, licensing fees, and support costs.

Yale concludes, “We’re achieving higher productivity from our workforce and that’s helping us concentrate on what we do best: providing reliable power and superior service to millions of customers. Brocade is helping us to maintain our position as a performance leader in the U.S. electric and gas utility industry.”

For more information, visit www.brocade.com.

KEY REASONS WHY AMEREN CHOSE BROCADE

- The only industry solution that enables data consolidation of multiple vendor file systems
- The sole solution that natively supports Microsoft Distributed File System (DFS)
- Fast, simple routing management that streamlines and centralizes data backup and restore operations
- Automated, more efficient file management processes

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