

Alberta Motor Association Puts New Backup Strategy Into Gear with ExaGrid

Customer Overview

The Alberta Motor Association (AMA) is the largest membership organization in the province of Alberta, with more than 835,000 members representing about 1 in 3 Alberta households. Since 1926, AMA has been the province's leading advocate for motoring and related consumer issues and the premier supplier of automotive and other travel services. More than 1,800 AMA employees serve its members from 18 centers throughout Alberta.

Need to Reduce Tape Handling, Automate Backup Processes Leads to Disk

The IT staff at AMA had backed up its business data to tape for years. Tired of handling tapes and concerned about its ability to restore data in the event of an emergency, the IT staff at AMA decided to look at alternative solutions.

"We were tired of handling tape and wanted to automate our backup processes," said Svend Knudskov, manager, AMA IT infrastructure and telephony. "We worried about losing tapes in transit between our datacenter and our disaster recovery site. Also, we occasionally had issues with restoring data from tape because of a tape error or because the tapes had been stored improperly. We realized the only solution was to move away from tape and start using disk backups."

AMA IT staff began the process of moving away from tape by backing up some of its data to disk nightly onto three 4TB disk volumes. Backup data was replicated to disk located in satellite offices via wireless WAN, and business-critical data was also backed up to tape. But while backing data up to disk made the process faster and reduced tape handling, the organization couldn't keep many copies on the system due to storage capacity issues.

"Disk backups were more reliable and faster than backing up to tape, but we also needed a solution that would reduce data so that we could keep more data on-site," said Knudskov.

AMA IT staff researched various approaches to disk-based backup, and evaluated systems from several vendors.

ExaGrid System Cost Effective, Data De-duplication Enables AMA to Keep More Backups On-site for Fast, Easy Restores

"We looked at several systems," said Knudskov. "We liked ExaGrid's approach to data de-duplication. The ExaGrid system provided us with all of the features and capacity we needed and was extremely cost effective."

AMA purchased two 10TB ExaGrid systems, installing each at separate locations. The ExaGrid systems work alongside CommVault Galaxy™, AMA's backup application.

"ExaGrid's data de-duplication has significantly reduced our data. We're currently keeping two to three months of data on our ExaGrid and haven't come close to hitting the total capacity yet," said Knudskov. "It's nice to have all of our backups readily available in case we need to restore data. We no longer have to think about retrieving tapes from an offsite facility or even from our own library. It's a new mindset. We know that the ExaGrid is extremely reliable and our data is there if we need it. And when we do need to restore a file, we can do it very quickly."

ExaGrid's data de-duplication technology stores changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies. This unique approach reduces the disk space required by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 or more, delivering unparalleled cost savings and performance. ExaGrid delivers extremely fast backup performance because data is written directly to disk, and data de-duplication is performed post-process after the data is stored to reduce data.

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"The ExaGrid system works well with CommVault Galaxy, and because we now have significantly more capacity, we have been able to restructure our backups to make them more efficient," said Knudskov. "Together, the two products enable us to perform daily incremental backups and synthetic full backups which makes our entire process run more smoothly."

Easy Installation and Responsive, Knowledgeable Customer Support from ExaGrid

As a customer-driven organization, quality customer support is also important to AMA.

"Installing the ExaGrid system was simple, and ExaGrid's customer support is extremely responsive. We recently had a disk drive that failed and received a replacement within a day," said Knudskov. "They are also extremely knowledgeable about backup processes. We are working on streamlining our backup strategy and we know we can count on ExaGrid to provide us with suggestions on how we can improve our backup methods."

ExaGrid and CommVault Galaxy

CommVault Galaxy Backup and Recovery software contains extensive capabilities to simplify the management of backup media resources. Galaxy software writes backup data to a broad collection of storage devices, including disk as a media target. This ability to write to magnetic disk as a functional equal of all other media types while exploiting the random access nature of the disk media sets Galaxy software apart.

Organizations using Galaxy can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Galaxy, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Galaxy, using ExaGrid in place of a tape backup system is as easy as pointing existing backup jobs at a NAS share on the ExaGrid system. Backup jobs are sent directly from the backup application to the ExaGrid for onsite backup to disk.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality SATA drives with byte-level data de-duplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication technology stores only the changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk space needed by a range of 10:1 to 50:1, or more, resulting in a solution that is 25 to 30% the cost of standard SATA drives.

ExaGrid is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, so organizations can retain their investment in existing applications.

ExaGrid can be used at a primary site and at a second site to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with a live data repository or for disaster recovery. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

For more information about ExaGrid, please visit www.ExaGrid.com or call us at 1-800-868-6985.

ABOUT EXAGRID

ExaGrid is the leader in cost-effective disk-based backup solutions. A scalable system that works with existing backup applications, ExaGrid is ideal for companies looking to quickly eliminate the hassles of tape backup while reducing their existing backup windows. ExaGrid's innovative approach minimizes the amount of data to be stored by providing standard data compression for the most recent backups along with byte-level data deduplication technology for all previous backups. Customers can deploy ExaGrid at a primary site and at a second site to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with a live data repository or for disaster recovery.

ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

2000 West Park Drive
Westborough, MA 01581

1 800.868.6985
www.ExaGrid.com

