

City of Huntsville Improves Backup Speed with ExaGrid

Customer Overview

Founded in 1835, Huntsville is one of Texas' oldest cities. Huntsville has a population of 35,078 and is situated in the eastern Piney Woods region of the state.

Legacy Tape Drive, Outdated Backup Software Resulted in Long Backup Times

As the network administrator for the City of Huntsville, Billy Wavra is responsible for ensuring that the city's data is properly backed up each and every night. However, using a legacy tape drive and an outdated backup application to protect the city's data was making it difficult to get reliable backups on a regular basis.

"Our backup jobs failed constantly and it was really affecting our ability to properly protect our data. Weekly full backups began on Friday nights and wouldn't finish until Tuesday, and nightly backups were taking two to three days to complete," said Wavra. "Towards the end, we would just stop the backup jobs if they didn't succeed during the allotted backup window because our network would slow down to a crawl."

ExaGrid Significantly Reduces Backup Times

Wavra and the rest of the IT team decided to look for a new solution and considered tape, storage-area network solutions and disk-based backup devices. The city eventually chose ExaGrid's disk-based backup system with data deduplication and Symantec's Backup Exec™ backup software.

"The ExaGrid system was the only solution that offered hardware deduplication, and we felt that its post-process approach would give us the fastest and most efficient backups," said Wavra. "When we tested the ExaGrid, we were blown away by the speed of the initial set of backups, and the performance of the system has only improved since then."

Since installing the ExaGrid system, the city of Huntsville has been able to reduce its backup times significantly. Full backups, which had been taking nearly four days to complete, are now finished within six hours. Incremental backups, which had been taking two to three days, are now completed in less than four hours.

Effective Data Deduplication, Fast Tape Off-site Copy Speed

"We're amazed at the speed of our backups. Our backups run so quickly and smoothly that we're able to complete them all during the day without affecting system performance," said Wavra. "We've also been really wowed by the data deduplication technology. Our dedupe rates vary according to the individual backup job, but on our database servers we're seeing 32:1 ratios. That's impressive."

ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with data deduplication, which 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 deduplication is performed post-process after the data is stored to reduce data.

The data on the ExaGrid system is currently copied to tape for off-site protection, however the city is planning on purchasing a second ExaGrid system to replicate data to its disaster recovery site. ExaGrid is cost effective when a two-site system is used because its data deduplication technology moves only changes between sites, minimizing the amount of bandwidth needed.

"We've been very pleased with the tape copy speed. It's almost as fast as the backups themselves," said Wavra. "Adding a second ExaGrid system to replicate data offsite will enable us to eliminate tape altogether and improve our ability to recover quickly from a disaster."

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Network Administrator
City of Huntsville

Superior Management and Customer Support, Scalability for the Future

ExaGrid comes packaged as a turnkey appliance and was designed to be easy to deploy and manage and to deliver maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components. All components are fully supported by ExaGrid's trained, in-house engineers dedicated to individual accounts.

"I recently upgraded the system myself and it was an easy process. The ExaGrid has a phenomenal interface that's intuitive and easy to use. Management and administration is a piece of cake," said Wavra. "We've also had a terrific experience with ExaGrid's customer support. Our support engineer worked with us to identify the best backup application for our environment and he was able to assist us with an issue we had with it. We have found support easy to reach and knowledgeable about both the ExaGrid system and about Backup Exec."

As the city's data grows, the ExaGrid can easily be expanded to handle additional data. ExaGrid's GRID computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, different sized configurations can be mixed and matched into a single GRID system with capacities of up to 60TB. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

"We like to plan ahead, and the ExaGrid system will enable us to incrementally expand the system as our data grows," said Wavra. "The ExaGrid was cost-effective to acquire, and the fact that we can scale up our existing unit to handle more data will make it an even better value in the long run. I really can't say enough about the system. It has made our backups much more reliable and efficient and we're spending far less time troubleshooting backups. The ExaGrid was the best choice for our environment."

ExaGrid and Symantec Backup Exec

Symantec Backup Exec provides cost-effective, high-performance, and certified disk-to-disk-to-tape backup and recovery – including continuous data protection for Microsoft Exchange, SQL, file servers, and workstations. High-performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection and scalable management of local and remote server backups.

Organizations using Symantec Backup Exec can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Symantec Backup Exec, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Symantec Backup Exec, 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 deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's byte-level data deduplication technology stores only the changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk 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. The ExaGrid system is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, so organizations can retain their investment in existing applications and processes.

ExaGrid servers can be used at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories for disaster recovery.

For more information about ExaGrid, please visit our website 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 highly scalable system that works with existing backup applications, the ExaGrid system 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 primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories or for disaster recovery.

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