

Carolina Bank Saves Big with ExaGrid Deduplication

Customer Overview

Carolina Bank began operations in 1996 under the name of Carolina Savings Bank, then, as now, under the leadership of Robert T. Braswell. The only locally owned community bank headquartered in Greensboro, North Carolina, it was founded with a commitment to the old-fashioned way of doing business – earning customers by providing excellent service, every day. Currently, Carolina Bank has more than 130 employees and six full-service banking locations: three in Greensboro, and one each in Asheboro, High Point, and Burlington.

Virtualized Environment, Long Backups, Limited Retention and High Tape Costs with SAN

The IT department at Carolina Bank had been backing up data from its various branch locations to a storage area network (SAN) and tape but was wasting time and money with long backup times and retention issues on a daily basis.

Due to limited disk space, and moving to a virtualized environment, Carolina bank realized that a disk-based backup solution would be the best solution.

“We were proactive in changing our technology for backups. We knew that backing up virtual snapshots to disk would be a whole lot faster and if we needed to restore particular files, the restore speed was very important. So we didn’t really have a nightmare backup situation, but we were proactive, we listened to our options from our VAR and we knew we needed disk backup with deduplication,” said Jessica Gourley, IT Officer and Vice President at Carolina Bank.

Two-site ExaGrid System Works with Existing Environment, Data De-duplication Maximizes Disk Space and Makes Replication Fly

Carolina Bank decided to purchase a disk-based backup system with data de-duplication and chose a two-site ExaGrid system after looking at several different products on the market. The bank installed an ExaGrid system in its main datacenter in Greensboro and a second system at a DR site within the state. The two systems replicate data back and forth for disaster recovery purposes.

“We felt that the ExaGrid system was the most elegant solution on the market in terms of scalability and backup and restore performance,” said Gourley. “It was easy to install and worked with our existing backup application so it really was a plug and play installation.”

The ExaGrid systems work alongside Carolina Bank’s existing backup applications, Symantec Backup Exec™, and Vizioncore vRanger Pro.

Currently, the bank retains twelve months of full backups and four weeks of daily incremental backups on the systems. Gourley says that the bank’s tape expenses

have been eliminated and monthly full backups are now completed in less than 10 hours.

“The ExaGrid system is definitely cost-effective. We save on tape expenses, but more importantly we save on time and resources. It has been a great benefit to not have to store, rotate, and retrieve tape offsite. In addition, the security of not having to inventory and audit those tapes and worry about loss or theft is a huge burden lifted and helps our compliance.

The restore performance has been fantastic. Just last week I had to restore two servers from our snapshot and it took only about 30 minutes to restore both servers simultaneously. I was very pleased with that. When we looked at the market and the different approaches to disk backup with deduplication, we were impressed with how ExaGrid has designed the system to really make backups better. Because the system keeps the most recent backup in its native form, compressed 2:1, restores are extremely easy and fast. Our restores are typically from the most recent backup, so this approach really makes sense.”

Gourley relied on the research and recommendation of her VAR, as well as a colleague at another bank. In reviewing closely the different approaches to data de-duplication and evaluating the difference between ExaGrid’s post-process approach and the in-line approach used by other products, the ExaGrid approach again was more appealing.

ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with data de-duplication, 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 fast backup performance because data is written directly to disk, and data de-duplication is performed post-process after the data is stored in order to reduce disk space. 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.

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GRID Architecture Ensures Easy Growth, Customer Support Helps Keep System Running Smoothly

Because Carolina Bank's data grows quickly, Gourley needed to ensure that the bank's backup system was scalable and could be expanded to handle more 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 a 60TB full backup plus retention. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

"The ExaGrid system is easily scaled-out. When the system's capacity is expanded, processing power and memory are also increased so that the processing is shared between servers. In some of the other products we looked at, disk space is added but the amount of processing power and memory stays the same." said Gourley. "This means that your backup performance begins to degrade again...the same problem we had with tape. This goes back to the elegance of the ExaGrid architecture. As capacity grows, so does processor and memory so your performance does not degrade."

Gourley has also found ExaGrid's customer support knowledgeable and proactive. ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support center is staffed by trained, in-house engineers who are dedicated to individual accounts. The ExaGrid system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

"We have a dedicated support engineer who is familiar with our installation and knowledgeable about the ExaGrid system and about backup processes in general. He's proactive and extremely responsive whenever we call. So ExaGrid support has been great," said Gourley.

Since installing the ExaGrid system, Carolina Bank has been able to reduce its backup times, increase retention, improve disaster recovery capabilities and reduce costs.

"The ExaGrid system has significantly improved our backups and our confidence in our data. We no longer have to worry about tape on a daily basis and our backups are fast and efficient.

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.

ExaGrid and Vizioncore vRanger Pro

ExaGrid offers VMware customers using Vizioncore's vRanger Pro the industry's fastest backups and restores, along with tremendously high data deduplication ratios (up to many 1,000's to 1). ExaGrid's Disk-based Backup systems serve as the backup target for these virtual machine images, using high performance, post-process data deduplication to dramatically reduce the disk storage capacity required for backups versus standard disk storage.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality enterprise disk drives with byte-level data de-duplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard disk. 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 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 disk. 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.

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 and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with a live data repository or for disaster recovery.

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