Ameris Bank Chooses ExaGrid over Data Domain for Seamless Integration with Veeam

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Shan Venable
Systems Architect
Ameris Bank

Key Benefits:

- ExaGrid's tight integration with Veeam provides fast backups, instant VM recovery
- Easy to install, operate, and expand
- Full copy of latest backups don't require rehydration to perform restores
- Nightly backups completed 'with time to spare'
- Assigned customer support engineer knows the bank and their environment as well as being well versed in Veeam

Customer Overview

Ameris Bank was founded as American Banking Company in 1971 and changed its name to Ameris Bank when its parent company, Ameris Bancorp, began acquiring banks in communities throughout Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and South Carolina. To date, Ameris Bank has over $3 billion in assets and over 60 banking locations. It is publically traded on the NASDAQ under ABCB.

Need to Eliminate Tape Led to ExaGrid System

Ameris Bank had been primarily backing up its data to tape, but managing and troubleshooting backups had become increasingly time consuming, and recoveries were error prone, according to Shan Venable, systems architect at Ameris Bank. "We decided the time was right to invest in a new backup solution, and there was no question that one of our main goals was to eliminate tape in our production environment," said Venable.

Ameris Bank decided to install a two-site ExaGrid system as part of its datacenter upgrade and relocation project. The bank looked at several solutions, including an EMC Data Domain product, before choosing a two-site ExaGrid system for primary backup and disaster recovery.

"The main reason we chose the ExaGrid system was its tight integration with our existing backup application, Veeam Backup & Replication. We are ninety percent virtualized and after doing some research, we learned that the combination of ExaGrid and Veeam would deliver the fast restores, data deduplication, and backup performance we were looking for," he said.

ExaGrid-Veeam Solution Delivers Fast Backups and Recoveries

With the combination of ExaGrid and Veeam, users can instantly recover and run a virtual machine (VM) directly from the ExaGrid system in the event that the primary VM is unavailable. Unlike competing disk

backup appliances, which only maintain a deduplicated copy of data and can take hours to reassemble or "rehydrate" the backup data, ExaGrid's high-speed landing zone maintains a full copy of the latest Veeam backups in their original formats.

Ameris Bank backs up its entire production environment to the ExaGrid system, and with a typical full backup of nearly 30TB, strong data reduction is critical. The bank uses Veeam's built-in data deduplication together with ExaGrid's zone-level deduplication to further reduce data.

Venable said that prior to installing the ExaGrid system, Ameris Bank sometimes had difficulty meeting its backup windows, but now backups are completed successfully each night with time to spare, even though the amount of the bank's backup data has increased.

ExaGrid combines standard compression along with zone-level data deduplication, which stores changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies. 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. 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. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology moves only the changes from backup to backup, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

EXAGRID™

Easy-to-Use System Backed by Top-notch Support

The ExaGrid system was designed to be easy to set up and maintain, and ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support team is staffed by trained, in-house engineers who are assigned to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

The bank initially purchased a two-site ExaGrid system consisting of two sets of four linked appliances for primary backup and disaster recovery, but then decided to redeploy one of the units in a small datacenter located three hours away in a remote office. Venable said that after discussing it with the ExaGrid support engineer assigned to the bank's account, the team decided to transport the entire system to the new site over a weekend, installed it, and then recovered the VMs to get the new datacenter up, running, and synchronized.

"The ExaGrid is a really solid, rugged system and we appreciate how easy it is to install and operate. It certainly makes my job easier," said Venable. "We also really love ExaGrid's customer support model. We have had the same engineer assigned to us since day one, and he knows us and knows our environment, so he's able to provide assistance above and beyond just answering simple questions," said Venable.

Scalability to Grow

As the bank's data grows, the ExaGrid system can easily scale to meet increased backup requirements.

"We made the decision to move the ExaGrid system to the remote site fairly quickly, so we expect that we'll purchase another unit to replace it in the near future," said Venable. "The ExaGrid offers us a lot of flexibility, and we like that we can simply buy another unit, slide it into the rack, and expand capacity at any point in time without doing a forklift upgrade."

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, so when the system needs to expand, additional appliance nodes are attached to the GRID, bringing with them not only additional disk but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliance nodes are added to the GRID, the ExaGrid automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

"We've been pleased with the ExaGrid system. We're spending significantly less time managing and troubleshooting backups than we were before, and we're more confident in our backups, too," said Venable. "The system offers us a high level of flexibility, and now our backup infrastructure is solid and poised for future expansion. It's been a great solution for us."

ExaGrid and Veeam

The combination of ExaGrid's and Veeam's industry-leading virtual server data protection solutions allows customers to utilize Veeam Backup & Replication in VMware, vSphere, and Microsoft Hyper-V virtual environments on ExaGrid's disk-based backup system. This combination provides fast backups and efficient data storage as well as replication to an offsite location for disaster recovery.

The ExaGrid system fully leverages Veeam Backup & Replication's built-in backup to disk capabilities and ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication for additional data reduction (and cost reduction) over standard disk solutions. Customers can use Veeam Backup & Replication's built-in source-side deduplication in concert with ExaGrid's disk-based backup system with zone-level deduplication to further shrink backups.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality disk drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is far more cost effective than simply backing up to straight disk. ExaGrid's zone-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 backing up to straight 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. 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 us at www.exagrid.com or call us at 1-800-868-6985.