ExaGrid's Scalability Positions Augusta State University to Handle Data Growth with Upcoming Merger

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

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Daniel Punches
Network Specialist II

Key Benefits:

- ExaGrid effectively dedupes ASU's redundant data, stores more in smaller footprint
- Immediate access to four weeks of full backups provides fast (and remote) response to user requests
- Ability to scale positions ASU for rapid data growth, in particular upcoming merger
- 'Top-notch' customer support

Customer Overview

Augusta State University is a public university located in Augusta, Georgia, and is the oldest such institution in the state. Augusta State offers more than 60 programs leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees. A merger has been approved to take place by the fall of 2013 with Georgia Health Sciences University.

Need for Faster Restores, Reduced Reliance on Tape

Augusta State University decided to look for a new backup solution in an effort to escalate restore times and reduce reliance on tape.

"We had been backing up to a robotic tape library and were transporting the tapes to an offsite storage facility," said Daniel Punches, network specialist II at Augusta State University. "It was cumbersome and time consuming, but the single biggest problem we had was restoring data."

According to Punches, "In some instances, tapes required for a restore were at the offsite facility. Arrangements had to be made with the vendor to have the tapes transported back to campus to complete the task. This caused significant delays in the restore process and aggravation for our customers. The tape library was aging fast, and we finally decided to look for a new solution that could deliver faster restores as well as reduce our reliance on tape."

Two-Site ExaGrid System Eliminates Tape, Provides Faster Restores

After looking at several different backup solutions, Augusta State University chose a two-site disk-based backup solution with data deduplication from ExaGrid. Data is replicated each night between the two ExaGrid systems, which are located in separate buildings on the campus. The systems work along with the university's existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec.

"The ExaGrid system was cost-effective, and it delivered the retention, ease of management and customer support were looking for," he said. "Data deduplication was also important. We have a lot of redundant data and wanted strong deduplication technology to enable us to store more data in a smaller footprint."

Punches said that the IT department can now turn around restore requests within minutes using the ExaGrid system. This includes remote restores since the need to physically manipulate tapes no longer exists.

"We're now able to be far more responsive to user requests because we have immediate access to four weeks of data on the ExaGrid system," he said. "ExaGrid's data deduplication technology is delivering 15:1 deduplication ratios overall, which enables us to maximize the amount of data we store."

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

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performance because data is written directly to disk, and data deduplication is performed post-process after the data is stored to reduce data. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Reduced Management and Monitoring

Punches said that the IT staff used to spend a considerable amount of time each week managing tape and performing backup-related tasks. Now, he simply monitors the system to ensure that backup jobs ran successfully.

"We used to spend a lot of time managing and monitoring tape backups. The ExaGrid system works extremely well day in and day out," he said. "It's a very solid system. If a drive fails, ExaGrid notifies us and a new one is sent out automatically."

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 dedicated to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

"ExaGrid's customer support is top-notch. Support representatives are professional and knowledgeable and they're easy to reach," Punches said.

Easy Scalability to Accommodate Growing Backup Requirements

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 130TB 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.

Punches noted that while scalability was a factor in choosing the ExaGrid system, it could become even more important as the university merges with Georgia Health Sciences University.

"The two universities are still working out how to best integrate both networks, but the fact that the ExaGrid can easily scale up could turn out to be a big plus. The ExaGrid is a very flexible system and if needed, we can easily add more capacity and increase performance to handle more data," he said.

Backing up data to the ExaGrid system is easier and more effective than backing up to tape, Punches said.

"We've been very happy with the ExaGrid system," he said. "It has significantly reduced the amount of man hours we spend on backups, and we're able to be far more responsive to our users."

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 zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. 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 standard SATA drives.

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

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