

FORMA Therapeutics Chooses ExaGrid over the Competition for Fastest Possible Backups

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Paul Kelly
Director of IT
FORMA Therapeutics

Customer Overview

Founded in 2008, FORMA Therapeutics has made significant progress in targeting essential targets and pathways relevant to cancer, developing a unique and aggressive approach to drug discovery. FORMA has assembled a formidable team of drug hunters who are driven to create transformative cancer therapies. The company's success has been validated over its short history by multiple partnerships with leading pharmaceutical companies that wish to leverage FORMA's capabilities, capacities and innovation. FORMA was selected by Fierce Biotech as one of the top 15 most promising private biotech companies and its collaboration with Genentech voted in the IN VIVO Deal of the Year in 2011.

ExaGrid System Remedies Insufficient Disaster Recovery, Long Backup Times

FORMA is performing groundbreaking cancer research that could change lives, so backing up and protecting data is a critical task for the company's IT staff. FORMA had been backing up data to tape but decided to look for a new approach to improve backup times and the company's ability to recover from a disaster.

"As a research organization, we need to ensure that we can recover quickly from a disaster, and we were concerned about our ability to do that with tape," said Paul Kelly, director of IT at FORMA Therapeutics. "We also needed to reduce our backup times. Our weekend backup jobs were spilling into Monday mornings, and we were beginning to see network slowdowns as a result. We decided to look around for alternative backup methods and quickly realized that disk-based backup was the way to go."

After looking at solutions from several vendors, FORMA decided to purchase a two-site disk-based backup solution from ExaGrid. The company installed one system in its Watertown, Massachusetts datacenter and another in its Branford, Connecticut site for disaster recovery. The ExaGrid systems work along with Veeam and Symantec Backup Exec to back up both virtual and physical servers, including administrative and financial data as well as research information.

Data Deduplication Delivers Fast Replication, Dedupe Rates as High as 70:1

"We looked at a few other solutions from major players in the space, and the number one reason we chose the ExaGrid system was its data deduplication capabilities. The ExaGrid backs up data to a landing zone so that backup jobs run as quickly as possible, and we get instant access to the most recent backup without having to decompress it," said Kelly. "Also, the ExaGrid system only replicates changed data between the sites, so we can easily push large amounts of data over the WAN."

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. 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.

"ExaGrid's data deduplication technology is extremely effective. We're getting 70:1 dedupe ratios for our Oracle data, which is simply amazing, and our other data dedupes effectively as well," said Kelly.



Faster Backup Times, Less Time Spent on Management and Administration

According to Kelly, since installing the ExaGrid system, FORMA's backup windows have been significantly reduced. "Our backups start on Friday nights at 10:00 p.m. and they used to run into Monday morning. Now, they still start off at the same time, but they're totally completed by Saturday morning at 7:00 am. That's a huge change for us," he said. "We don't have to worry about our backup windows anymore."

Kelly said he spends far less time managing and administering backups with the ExaGrid system.

"The ExaGrid system is so easy to manage. I like the Web interface because it's intuitive and it gives me all the information and reporting I need. I used to spend hours managing tape. Having the ExaGrid system in place probably saves me a half a day or more of administration time alone each week," he said.

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 has been fantastic. If you're having a backup issue, the last thing you need to do is send an email a message and wonder if it's going to be read or sit in a queue to wait to talk with someone. Our support engineer is knowledgeable and easy to reach," said Kelly. "I know if I'm having any sort of issue, I can call into ExaGrid and get an experienced engineer on the phone right away."

Easily Scalable to Meet Future Needs

FORMA started with a pair of ExaGrid systems for primary backup and disaster recovery and scaled the system up to add capacity.

"We were able to easily add capacity and performance by simply plugging in additional units. In just a couple of hours, we were able to retarget the jobs and then the two units were automatically balancing data," said Kelly. "Once we scaled the systems up, we increased the throughput, and our backup times were reduced even further. The replication between sites was more effective, too. It's wonderful to have that option without having to undergo a forklift upgrade." 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.

"We're easily meeting our backup windows now, and I have a high level of comfort in our disaster recovery plan," said Kelly. "In the event of a disaster, I can quickly spin up the second system and restore the company to an up-and-running status in a lot less time than if I had to recall tapes, spin them up, run the catalogs, etc. Having the ExaGrid system in place gives me peace of mind."

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.

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.

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.