

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Streamlines Backups, Saves Money with Disk-based Backup

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Dana McCutcheon
IT Specialist
Federal Mediation &
Conciliation Service

Customer Overview

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), created in 1947, is an independent agency whose mission is to preserve and promote labor-management peace and cooperation. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., with two regional offices and more than 70 field offices, the agency provides mediation and conflict resolution services to industry, government agencies and communities.

High Cost of Tape and Transportation and Inefficiency Led to Search for New Solution

FMCS’s IT department is responsible for supporting 500 users in 250 different offices throughout the U.S. The agency conducts much of its business over the web and protects lots of different types of data, including information from web, database, Blackberry and email servers that are located in its Washington, D.C. datacenter and are used to support its day-to-day business activities. The staff had been backing up the agency’s data to a disk array for short-term storage and then sent the backups to tape each night for long-term storage. Each week, the IT staff mailed out tapes to a secure facility for safekeeping, but with a three-year retention mandate, tape costs, mailing and offsite storage was a budget-buster.

“Storing our data on tape was expensive and time consuming and we worried about data integrity. We needed a solution that would enable us to keep more data on disk for a longer period of time and would reduce our tape usage or eliminate it all together,” said Dana McCutcheon, information technology specialist for the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. “After educating ourselves about different disk-based backup options, we decided that it was the route to take.”

Two-site ExaGrid Provides Data Replication to Reduce Tape Costs

FMCS chose a two-site ExaGrid disk-based backup system and installed one system in its Washington, D.C. datacenter. The

agency will install the second system offsite to provide data replication and will use its existing tape drive to copy the ExaGrid system to tape periodically. The ExaGrid system works along with the agency’s existing backup application, Symantec’s Backup Exec™.

The ExaGrid system incorporates patented byte-level data deduplication technology to reduce the amount of data stored. 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 byte-level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

“The data deduplication technology works very well and we’re currently only using 6.5 percent of the available space on the system. It enabled us to purchase a system with a smaller amount of disk than we otherwise would have,” said McCutcheon. “Also, the deduplication will make it more effective to use the second ExaGrid system for data replication because only the changes will be transmitted over the network.”



Since implementing the disk-based backup system, FMCS has changed its backup procedures to take advantage of the additional disk space. The IT staff at FMCS had been performing differential backups of various servers each night and then immediately sending the backup to tape due to lack of disk space. Now, the staff performs differential backups each night and keeps them on the ExaGrid system in case the data is needed for restores. Full backups are performed each weekend and the data is copied off to tape for archival purposes. When the second ExaGrid system is installed, FMCS will be able to further reduce its reliance on tape because the data will be automatically replicated to the disaster recovery center.

Cost-effective System Saves on Tape and Transportation, Leverages Existing Backup Technology

FMCS had been spending over \$800 per month on tapes and \$60 a week to mail the tapes to its disaster recovery center. Since installing the disk-based backup system, FMCS has been able to reduce its backup costs considerably and will be able to reduce costs even further when the second site is deployed. ExaGrid makes these savings possible by first reducing the number of tapes required per month because of the longer data-to-disk retention and the automated data integrity check technology of ExaGrid systems we no longer felt it necessary to push daily differentials and/or incremental to tape. Instead we only push full backups to tape and we schedule those full backups to run less frequently. Secondly, purchasing two ExaGrid systems, one for our national office and one for our disaster recovery (DR) site allows us to move the tape backup drive out to the DR site where the full tapes are stored. This means we saved the cost of mailing full tapes out to the DR site for storage.

"The system was more cost-effective than some of the other solutions we looked at. It was less expensive to acquire and we were able to use it along with our existing backup application and tape drive. It was also more advantageous to purchase the ExaGrid system in terms of licensing and maintenance," said McCutcheon. "We were able to set the system up ourselves and it's easy to manage and administer. When we factored all that in with the reduced tape and transportation costs, it was an easy choice." Since installing the system, the agency has been able to reduce its backup to disk times as well as its tape copy times by 30 percent.

Appliance Packaging, Top-notch Support

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. "We considered several different approaches to backing up our data and we liked the fact that the ExaGrid came packaged as one unit and with all the components supported by a single vendor," said McCutcheon. "The support we've received from ExaGrid's technical support and sales organization has been simply outstanding. The individuals we deal with are experienced, extremely responsive and knowledgeable about the ExaGrid product and about backup processes. The system has made a tremendous difference in our backup processes and in our ability to fully protect our data."

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 us at www.exagrid.com or call us at 1-800-868-6985.