

# School District Improves Restores, Reduces Backup Times with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

GRANVILLE COUNTY SCHOOLS

"The ExaGrid is one of the best devices I have on my network. It just runs."

Damien Ball  
Systems Engineer  
Granville County Schools

## Key Benefits:

- Tape is a thing of the past
- Restores are simplified
- Backup window reduced from 4 hours to 1-2 hours per device
- Interface is 'clean and easy to understand'
- Works seamlessly with CommVault Simpana

## Customer Overview

Granville County Schools is a PK-12 graded school district serving Granville County, North Carolina. Its 20 schools serve approximately 9,000 students. The district is implementing a 1:1 computing environment from grades 3-12. Integration of digital resources in the classroom is a major focus for the district. The requirements for data protection and restoration increase exponentially as devices are deployed into the classroom. Granville County Schools has chosen ExaGrid as the primary storage device for their data protection needs.

## Difficult Restores, Long Backups to Disk and Tape

The IT staff at the Granville County Schools had been backing up data to disk and then offloading it to a tape library but found restoring data difficult and backup times lengthy.

"Trying to get data off tape was always an ordeal, and our backups were running way too long," said Damien Ball, systems engineer for the Granville County Schools. "We eventually decided to look for a new backup system capable of simplifying restores and improving backup times. After looking at solutions from ExaGrid, EMC, and NetApp, we chose the ExaGrid system."

## Faster Backups and Restores

Ball said that ExaGrid's simplicity, easy setup, scalability, and tight integration with the district's existing backup application, CommVault Simpana, made the ExaGrid system rise to the top.

"The ExaGrid system offered everything we needed in one unit," said Ball. "Restores are so much faster than before. I can pull up the restore window and instantly access any file I want. I don't have to find tapes, make sure they're in the right sequence, and spend an hour trying to recover a file."

ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication technology helps to maximize the amount of data stored on the system while ensuring that backups run as quickly as possible, Ball said.

"We like the fact that the ExaGrid system first backs the data up to a landing zone before deduplicating it. Our backup times have gone from four hours per device to between one and two hours per device," he said.

ExaGrid combines standard compression along with zone-level 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 the changes from backup to backup, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

## Easy to Install and Manage, Superior Customer Support

"The ExaGrid system was really easy to set up and integrate into CommVault Simpana. Once it was installed, it was simple to carve out all the shares we needed, and our data was being backed up and deduped in about ten minutes," he said. "It's also very stable. The ExaGrid is one of the best devices I have on my network. It just runs."

**EXAGRID**<sup>™</sup>

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.

"The ExaGrid interface is really clean and easy to understand. The main screen has all the basic information needed to manage the system, and it's easy to drill down for other information," said Ball. "Our ExaGrid customer support engineer has been great to work with. He's proactive and calls us if there are updates that need to be performed or if he notices that maintenance needs to be done on the system."

## Easy to Scale for Increased Capacity and Performance

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, where each appliance contains processing power, memory, bandwidth, and disk. When the system needs to expand, additional appliance nodes are attached to the GRID, bringing with them additional processing power, memory, bandwidth, and disk. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows, and you are only paying for the amount of processing power, memory, and bandwidth as you need it. 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.

"One of the things we initially liked about the ExaGrid system was its scalability and flexibility. We have the ability to add another unit to increase performance or capacity, and we can also add another unit offsite for disaster recovery," said Ball.

Ball said that installing the ExaGrid system frees him up and enables him to spend more time on other parts of his job. "Having the ExaGrid system in place has really lightened my workload because I no longer have to deal with tape libraries or moving tape offsite," he said.

## ExaGrid and CommVault Simpana

CommVault Simpana Backup and Recovery software contains extensive capabilities to simplify the management of backup media resources. Simpana software writes backup data to a broad collection of storage devices, including disk as a media target. This ability to write to magnetic disk as a functional equal of all other media types while exploiting the random access nature of the disk media sets Simpana software apart.

Organizations using CommVault Simpana can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Simpana, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Simpana, 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 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](http://www.exagrid.com) or call us at 1-800-868-6985.**