Health New England Enhances DR with Cross-Replicating ExaGrid Systems

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

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Dave Lewis
LAN Administrator
Health New England

Customer Overview

Health New England, Inc. (HNE) is a Massachusetts-based Health Maintenance Organization (HMO). HNE serves over 122,000 members and is headquartered in Springfield.

Limited Retention with Costly SAN Backups

Health New England's IT staff liked the speed and convenience of backing up to its storage area network but found it expensive to keep adding disk to keep up with data growth. Retention was also an issue because the organization lacked data deduplication technology. Finally, HNE decided to look for a new disk-based backup solution with data deduplication to reduce the amount of data stored along with replication capabilities to strengthen disaster recovery capability.

"We looked at a few different products, including ExaGrid, Data Domain and Symantec. We're a Symantec shop, and in the end, we narrowed it down to the Symantec 5020 disk array and the ExaGrid solution," said Dave Lewis, LAN administrator at HNE. "We decided to go with the ExaGrid system based on its strong data deduplication technology, tight integration with Backup Exec, and the company's proactive support model."

Strong Level of Integration with Backup Exec Simplifies Management

HNE purchased a two-site ExaGrid system to provide primary backup at one site and disaster recovery at another. The ExaGrid system works along with the organization's existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec, to back up and protect a wide range of data types, including Windows, VMware and SharePoint information.

The ExaGrid system has tight native integration with Backup Exec. HNE takes advantage of Backup Exec's OpenStorage Technology (OST) capabilities, which enable both onsite and offsite backup data to be stored on the ExaGrid system and managed from within the Backup Exec console. The backup catalog is also kept up to date with the replicated offsite backups, so status of onsite and offsite backups through Backup Exec reporting can be monitored. Backup data can also be easily recovered from within the Backup Exec console.

"We have our cache server here at our main datacenter and our managed media server at our disaster recovery site. Both systems are backed up to the ExaGrid system located in our primary datacenter and then replicated offsite. With OST, we're able to track all our changes and the backup server is able to know what's on each system. It's a big time saver for us because we don't have to catalog everything on each site," said Dave.

Post-Process Data Deduplication Speeds Backups, Delivers Dedupe Ratios as High as 44:1

"We get extremely good data deduplication ratios, especially on our SQL backups. Our data deduplication ratios average 15:1 to 20:1, and our highest job dedupes at an astonishing 44:1 ratio," said Dave. "ExaGrid's strong data deduplication enabled us to improve our retention from one day to several weeks, making restores far faster and more efficient than they were with tape."

EXAGRID™

"One of the things that has impressed us the most about the ExaGrid system is the backup speed. To be honest, one of our big concerns about moving to an appliance was that we'd sacrifice speed. However, because the ExaGrid system backs up data to a landing zone before the deduplication starts, our backup jobs run very quickly," he said.

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.

Easy Setup and Management, Unrivaled Customer Support

Dave said that the ExaGrid system was fast to install, and it's easy to manage and administer.

"Installing the ExaGrid system was a painless process and it's easy to maintain. The GUI is intuitive, so I can easily show others how it works, and they can jump right in," 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 is phenomenal. We love that we have a dedicated support engineer who knows us and knows our environment so we don't have to explain things repeatedly to new people all the time. Also, our support engineer has expert knowledge of Backup Exec, so he's able to help with any type of issue that comes up," said Dave.

GRID Architecture Ensures Scalability

"It's nice to know that the ExaGrid system will be able to scale up to handle more backup data as our needs grow," said Dave. "It's an extremely flexible system, and it's helped our backup processes considerably. Having the ExaGrid system in place enables me to focus on other aspects of my job instead of worrying about backups."

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.

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.

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.

About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

Customers worldwide depend on ExaGrid Systems to solve their backup problems–effectively and permanently. ExaGrid's disk-based, scale-out GRID architecture adjusts to increasing backup demands due to constantly growing data volumes. It is the only solution that combines compute with capacity as well as a unique landing zone to permanently shorten backup windows and eliminate expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at **www.exagrid.com**.

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