Hitachi Consulting Improves Backup Capabilities with ExaGrid

◉ Hitachi Consulting

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Bradford Leonard
Network Engineer

Key Benefits:

- Hitachi can now implement better backup procedures, reducing backup times
- Hitachi can now back up all of its data, previously unable to do so with tape
- Using ExaGrid saves 'thousands of dollars' in license fees
- ExaGrid provides 'best support in the industry'

Customer Overview

Hitachi Consulting is the global business and IT consulting company of Hitachi Ltd., and a widely recognized leader in delivering practical, value-based business strategies and technology solutions. Hitachi Consulting's client base includes 25 percent of the Global 100 as well as many leading mid-market companies. Based in Dallas, Texas, Hitachi Consulting has offices in North America, Europe and Asia.

Frustration with Tape Backup

Hitachi Consulting is a fast growing company with demanding data protection needs. The firm's rapid data growth had outpaced the capacity of its tape library, leaving its IT department with long backup windows and the burden of dealing with cumbersome tape and inflexible backup processes.

"Backing up to tape simply isn't as reliable as backing up to disk. With tape, there are always physical issues to contend with and maintenance on the system and so many different parts that can fail," said Brad Leonard, network engineer for Hitachi Consulting. "Our backup windows were out of control and we were spending in excess of 30 minutes a day just managing tape. And if we had an issue with a tape or the tape library itself, we could spend hours resolving problems."

Cost, Packaging, and Integration Make ExaGrid/NetBackup a Winning Combination

Hitachi Consulting's IT department began looking for a new backup system that could work together with its existing backup application, Veritas NetBackup.

The company chose ExaGrid to work alongside NetBackup after looking at several other competing solutions. The firm purchased a total of six ExaGrid systems for primary backup and disaster recovery. Three systems are located at Hitachi Consulting's datacenter in Dallas, and backup data is mirrored to another three systems at another Hitachi consulting office in Addison, TX.

The two sites are connected via a 100MB connection. The firm's financial data is also copied off to tape as an extra precaution.

"The ExaGrid system was much more cost-effective than the other solutions and it integrated nicely with NetBackup," said Leonard.

"We also liked the way that ExaGrid sells its solution in units that make it easy to properly size the system. With ExaGrid, we were confident in the system sizing from the very beginning because we knew exactly how much landing space there would be and it eliminated a lot of the guesswork. We didn't have that level of confidence in the other solutions. Because the ExaGrid system performs data deduplication, we knew that we could just dump our data onto the disk and then the ExaGrid would deduplicate the data behind the scenes. Data deduplication also makes our backups run faster than on-the-fly or inline approaches."

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 after the data is stored.

EXAGRID®

Cost Savings on License Fees and Maintenance with ExaGrid, Greater Flexibility for Backups

Hitachi Consulting found several advantages in using the combination of NetBackup and ExaGrid instead of tape. In particular, the firm was able to realize cost savings on licenses and maintenance fees and was able to be more flexible with its procedures to maximize the efficiency of its backups and improve data retention and restores.

"Backing up to ExaGrid instead of tape saved us thousands of dollars in license and maintenance fees. We didn't need any additional licenses or maintenance to back up to disk because the ExaGrid simply looks like any other Windows server. That was a tremendous cost savings," said Leonard. "There are many different things we can do with the ExaGrid/NetBackup combination that we couldn't do with tape. For example, we can now easily mix retention policies and be more flexible with our data than ever before."

Ability to Fully Protect all 12TB Efficiently with ExaGrid, Backup Times Significantly Reduced

Hitachi Consulting backs up nearly 12TB of data to ExaGrid. The firm has changed its backup procedures with ExaGrid and now runs incremental differential backups each night instead of cumulative differentials, so the amount of data backed up each night is reduced. Nightly backups run for approximately three hours, and full backups run each weekend, taking about 30 hours. Hitachi Consulting was only able to back up approximately 7TB of data with its old tape library. Cumulative differential backups ran each night for over 12 hours and full backups ran each weekend for more than 48 hours.

"Because we had exhausted the capacity of our tape library we weren't able to back up all of our data. With the ExaGrid system, we were able to increase the amount of data that we back up by another 4 to 5TB," said Leonard. "We are now able to keep 30 days of data on our ExaGrid system so we can perform restores quickly and painlessly from data onsite instead of recalling tapes from offsite storage."

Easy Installation, Superior Customer Support

"Installing the ExaGrid system was a breeze. In terms of NetBackup, all I had to do was create disk storage units and then point the backup to them. In many cases, I was able to reuse existing policies. The setup was far less complicated than tape." Leonard also said that easy setup and ExaGrid's proactive, knowledgeable customer support made installing and running the system painless. "ExaGrid's customer support has been stellar. In fact, it's been among the best support I've had from any vendor I've worked with and I would put them up against any other support organization in the industry. They are smart, tenacious and reliable and we know we can count on them to help us make the most of our ExaGrid system," said Leonard.

ExaGrid and NetBackup

Veritas NetBackup delivers high performance data protection that scales to protect the largest UNIX, Windows, Linux and NetWare environments. With complete protection from remote office to center to vault, NetBackup offers a single console for all backup and recovery operations. Organizations using Veritas NetBackup can look to ExaGrid as, an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as NetBackup, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running NetBackup, 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 space 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.

ExaGrid is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, so organizations can retain their investment in existing applications.

ExaGrid can be used at a primary site and at a second site to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with a live data repository or for disaster recovery. 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.

About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides hyper-converged secondary storage (HCSS) for backup with a unique landing zone and scale-out architecture. The landing zone enables the fastest backups, restores, and instant VM recoveries. The scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable system and ensures a fixed-length backup window as data grows, eliminating expensive and disruptive forklift upgrades. Learn more at **www.exagrid.com**.