

PRI Meets Strict State Regulations with Encryption-at-Rest; Reduces Backup Window Up to 97% with ExaGrid and Veeam

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Al Villani
Senior System Administrator

Key Benefits:

- Switch to ExaGrid and Veeam saves PRI staff up to 30 hours per week on backup management
- PRI backup windows reduced by 97% after replacing tape
- ExaGrid's encryption-at-rest ensures that PRI meets state security regulations for data storage
- Data restores are much quicker; one server restore reduced from a week to just 20 minutes

Customer Overview

Physicians' Reciprocal Insurers (PRI) is a leading provider of professional liability insurance for physicians and medical facilities. As the second largest medical malpractice insurer in New York State and one of the top ten in the U.S., PRI is recognized as one of the most respected names in its field. Founded in 1982 by physicians to serve the healthcare industry and its professionals, PRI continues to be a leader in providing coverage and innovative products that anticipate the needs and further the financial goals of policyholders, and offers key services to help improve the liability environment for doctors, chiropractors, dentists, and healthcare facilities.

Time-Consuming Tape Backup Leads to Search for New Solution

Physicians' Reciprocal Insurers (PRI) had been backing up its data to an LTO-2 tape drive using Veritas NetBackup. As the company's data outgrew its tape storage, a six-drive LTO-4 tape device was purchased; however, because it wasn't properly sized for PRI's environment, it didn't fix the problematic backup issues that the IT staff was facing. Over time, PRI had been virtualizing its environment, and it was a struggle to keep up with the growing number of servers while encumbered by the limitations of tape.

In addition, storing and managing tapes was expensive and taking up too much of the workweek. "It became a part-time job just to manage the rotation of tapes," said Al Villani, the senior system administrator at PRI. "Every morning, it used to take me two hours to do the paperwork, and then I'd sort the tapes by container according to retention for pickup by Iron Mountain. Before the weekend, I'd spend all day on Friday sorting out the old data so I could insert new tapes. We were using about two cases of LTO-4 tapes per month, which was getting costly and taking a toll on the tape drives."

Villani also found that working with Veritas NetBackup could be time-consuming, especially if troubleshooting was needed. "NetBackup wasn't set up to send us any kind of alerts if there was an issue, so we had to log in and look through it, which was a lot of manual work. Our calls to Symantec support were sent offshore right away, and by the time they got back to us, we had usually found the solution by searching online. Veritas eventually reacquired NetBackup, but the support never improved."



PRI looked into a number of backup solutions, including Dell EMC and cloud-based storage, but none of those options were comparable to ExaGrid in terms of features, security, or pricing. Since PRI was also nearing the end of its NetBackup license, Villani looked into alternate backup applications and was interested in Veeam.

"Many other professionals in my field recommended ExaGrid, so we invited the ExaGrid sales team in to do a presentation. They explained ExaGrid's data deduplication process and its unique landing zone, which were pretty impressive. They also hyped up the maintenance and support that ExaGrid offers, which features one assigned support engineer that works with you and gets to know your environment. After my many disappointing experiences with other vendors, I didn't really believe them, but they were right! ExaGrid support is impressive to work with," said Villani.

Installation Issues Resolved Through Capable Support

PRI installed ExaGrid and Veeam at its primary site, and also established a DR site for replication. Villani experienced first-hand

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the value and expertise of ExaGrid support when he realized the reseller he purchased from neglected to factor in a Nexus switch, which is necessary to connect the ExaGrid system to the fibre channel. "Our ExaGrid support engineer ordered a Nexus switch for us and walked us through the configuration process. He really knows the ins and outs of those appliances, and the level of support has been fantastic! When we had to seed the two appliances here and send one offsite to our DR center, he was on top of it. He made sure that the replication was working, and went above and beyond throughout the whole process.

"Early on, our support engineer noticed that we were having some trouble with our deduplication. A configuration problem with Veeam was preventing us from getting any deduplication at all, which was affecting the replication to our DR site. He helped us correct the problem, and now our deduplication ratios are growing to where they should be," said Villani. "Working with our support engineer has been a saving grace. Managing backups had been a nightmare at times, but switching to ExaGrid has been a dream come true. We're saving about 25-30 hours a week on managing backups. The ExaGrid system doesn't need a lot of babysitting, and our support engineer is available whenever we need help with any issue."

It's Not 'Witchcraft' – Backups up to 97% Quicker and Data Restored in Minutes

Since switching to ExaGrid and Veeam, Villani has noticed a huge reduction in the backup window, which has had a positive impact on users throughout the company. "Our weekly full backup used to run from Saturday morning at 2:00 a.m. all the way into Tuesday afternoon. Every Monday, users would be calling in and asking why the system was so slow. Now, our weekly full takes just three hours! We thought something was broken the first time we used ExaGrid, so we called our support engineer who confirmed that everything ran correctly. It's totally incredible!"

Villani found that daily incrementals had a much shorter backup window, too. He used to stagger daily backups so that users wouldn't be impacted, and the daily incrementals would take up to 22 hours using Veritas NetBackup and tape. Since switching to ExaGrid and Veeam, daily incrementals have been reduced by 97% and are finished in about 30 minutes.

In addition to shorter backup windows, Villani has been impressed with how quickly data is restored using the combination of ExaGrid and Veeam. "When we were using NetBackup and tape, it would take about a week to restore an Exchange server. It's quite a process to go through all of those

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.

tapes, find the right location, read the data, move it, and so on. I run test restores periodically, and I was able to bring up the entire Exchange server in 20 minutes using ExaGrid and Veeam. "As far as file restores, there are some users who often delete files and then realize later that they need those files back. It would take four hours for me to restore a simple file or a spreadsheet, and that was too long for most users to wait. Now, I can find the file, open it to make sure it's the right one, and send it to the user in minutes - they look at me like I'm performing witchcraft!"

ExaGrid writes backups directly to a disk landing zone, avoiding inline processing and ensuring the highest possible backup performance, which results in the shortest backup window. "Adaptive" deduplication performs deduplication and replication in parallel with backups while providing full system resources to the backups for the shortest backup window. Available system cycles are utilized to perform deduplication and offsite replication for an optimal recovery point at the disaster recovery site. Once complete, the onsite data is protected and immediately available in its full undeduplicated form for fast restores, VM Instant Recoveries, and tape copies while the offsite data is ready for disaster recovery.

ExaGrid Meets Security Regulations and Data Retention Mandates

As an insurance company, PRI has a complex retention policy for its data, so it was important to choose a solution that would accommodate the amount of storage needed. "We keep five weeks of daily backups, eight weeks of weekly backups, a year's worth of monthly backups onsite, and one yearly onsite with seven yearlies offsite, as well as offsite storage for infinite fiscals and monthly backups. We were skeptical at first that an ExaGrid system could handle that amount of storage, but the engineers sized everything really well and ExaGrid guaranteed the sizing would work for two years, and that if we needed to add another appliance, they would supply it. Seeing that in writing was pretty impressive!"

The security of data storage in the insurance industry has been moving toward stricter regulation, so PRI looked for a solution that would help keep the company ahead of the curve. "The insurance claims we process contain sensitive information, such as birth dates and Social Security numbers. Even the tape we used was encrypted, the cases we stored them in were locked, and Iron Mountain had to sign for them. The state regulations are pretty thorough when it comes to security. Many solutions don't offer encryption or the ability to encrypt at rest like ExaGrid does," said Villani.

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