

School District Chooses ExaGrid for Faster Backups, Restores, and DR

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Greg Swan
Senior Network Technician

Key Benefits:

- Cross-replication between sites occurs automatically
- Time required to manage backups greatly reduced
- Restores are faster and more reliable than tape
- System was easily expanded to accommodate growing data

Customer Overview

The Rush-Henrietta Central School District, located in Henrietta, New York, is comprised of five elementary schools (grades K through 5), two middle schools (grades 6 through 8), a ninth grade academy, and one high school (grades 10 through 12), which includes an alternative education program. The district is situated near Rochester, New York, 20 minutes south of Lake Ontario. The district serves nearly 6,000 students.

Difficulty Backing up Dual Datacenters to Tape

The Rush-Henrietta Central School District had been backing up its data to tape libraries in two separate datacenters, but the cost and day-to-day grind of managing tape led its IT staff to look for alternative solutions.

"Managing tape backups in two different locations was difficult and time consuming. My predecessors spent a lot of time driving back and forth between the sites and probably an hour or so a day handling tapes and managing backup jobs," said Greg Swan, senior network technician at the Rush-Henrietta Central School District. "We took a close look at the overall cost of tape along with our future backup requirements and decided to install a two-site ExaGrid system."

With the ExaGrid system in place, data is backed up locally and then cross-replicated between the two sites for disaster recovery.

"We spend a lot less time managing backups now, and there's almost no intervention on our part. All we have to do is check the logs to make sure our backup jobs ran successfully overnight," Swan said. "Restores are also far easier with the ExaGrid system. We recently had to go in and rebuild our entire backup system, and it was relatively painless. With tape, it would have been a nightmare, but it took no time at all with the ExaGrid system."

Scalability Improves Capacity and Performance

The district first installed ExaGrid EX5000 appliances in each of its datacenters and then expanded both systems by adding EX10000E units. The ExaGrid systems work along with Dell NetVault SmartDisk, the district's existing backup application, to back up nearly 75 physical and virtual servers.

"We decided to expand the systems to improve capacity and performance, and found it to be a very simple process. Our ExaGrid support engineer helped us upgrade the software on our old systems. Then we configured the systems, and they were ready to go in no time," he said.

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, so when the system needs to expand, additional appliance nodes are attached to the GRID, bringing with them not only additional disk but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliances are added to the GRID, the system automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

Faster Backups and Restores, Dedupe Ratios Average 10:1

Swan said that ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication technology reduces the amount of data stored by approximately 10:1 and helps to speed the transmission between sites. Backup jobs run faster as well.

"We can now back up all our data over the weekend and have it replicated offsite by the time we come in on Monday mornings. With tape, our backup jobs took much longer and we'd have to drive the tapes back and forth between the two datacenters," Swan said. "Now, our data is backed up quickly and automatically to the ExaGrid's landing zone and then deduplicated. And because only changed data is sent between sites, replication is fast."

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. 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.

Simple Interface, 'Fantastic' Customer Support

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 assigned to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and

was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

"The ExaGrid's interface is simple to understand, and it puts a lot of information at my fingertips," Swan said. "The system is backed by fantastic customer support. We have a high degree of confidence in our support engineer, and he's easy to reach whenever we have a question or concern."

Swan said that the ExaGrid system has significantly reduced the amount of time the district's IT staff spends on managing backups.

"The ExaGrid system has been a good solution for our environment. It quickly backs up the data from our two datacenters and replicates it offsite. We don't have to worry about managing tape anymore, and it's reduced the amount of hours we spend on backups so we can focus on other parts of our jobs," he said.

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.

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.