

ExaGrid Slashes SNI's Backup Window by 50%

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Juan Sanchez
Senior Systems Administrator
SNI Companies

Key Benefits:

- Small appliance footprint
- Deduplication technology maximizes storage space
- Integration with Symantec Backup Exec and Dell vRanger minimized learning curve
- Backup window reduced from 12 to 6 hours; no more network slowdowns due to backups
- 'Easy to use' interface

Customer Overview

Founded in 1998 by former Robert Half executive Ron Smith, SNI Companies is one of the fastest growing employment services companies. Based in West Des Moines, Iowa, SNI specializes in professional placement in the areas of accounting, finance, banking, administration, legal support, and technology. With revenues in excess of \$100 million, SNI ranks among the top 100 U.S. staffing companies and was recently named one of the fastest growing private staffing companies in the country by Staffing Industry Analysts.

Infrastructure Upgrade Led to Choice of ExaGrid over Tape

SNI was undertaking an overall infrastructure upgrade and virtualization initiative to meet its growing technology needs. It was an opportune time to replace its backup solution with something more technologically current than tape.

"We were consuming a ton of tape just trying to back up our growing amounts of data. Our backup times were very long, and we found restoring data from tape challenging, to say the least," said Juan Sanchez, senior systems administrator at SNI.

After looking at competitive solutions, SNI chose the ExaGrid system based on its data deduplication technology, functionality, and tight integration with Symantec Backup Exec and Dell vRanger.

"The ExaGrid system was a good fit for our infrastructure. We liked its small footprint and the fact that its data deduplication technology would help us pack more data into our disk storage," said Sanchez. "It also works well with our existing backup applications, so integration time and our learning curve were minimal."

Backup Windows Cut in Half

Since SNI installed the ExaGrid system, the company has seen its backup windows cut in half – from twelve hours to just six – and Sanchez said he saves several hours a week

in tape management and troubleshooting backup jobs.

"The difference between backing up to the ExaGrid system and backing up to tape is like night and day. If I had a choice, I'd never use tape again," he said. "I love the concept that the data is backed up and deduplicated right to the same unit, and that the data is available and can be easily restored at any time."

Sanchez said that the ExaGrid system's data deduplication maximizes the amount of data stored on the unit, and SNI is currently seeing average data deduplication ratios of 25:1 and as high as 60:1.

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.

Scalable, Easy to Manage Solution with Superior Customer Support

Sanchez said that he finds the ExaGrid system's user interface intuitive and easy to use, which helps to minimize the amount of time he spends on daily system management and monitoring.

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 system works seamlessly with Backup Exec and vRanger, and the management interface is easy to use," he said. "We've also had a very good experience with ExaGrid's customer support. Our support engineer recently helped us upgrade the system to add more capacity, and he provided valuable guidance and assistance during the process."

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.

"Installing the ExaGrid system has taken many of the headaches out of our backup processes. We don't have to babysit backups anymore, and we don't worry about backup jobs running into the workday and slowing down our network," said Sanchez. "It's been a great solution for our environment."

ExaGrid and Dell vRanger

Dell's vRanger solution offers full image level and differential backups of virtual machines to enable faster, more efficient storage and recovery of virtual machines. ExaGrid's disk-based

backup systems serve as the backup target for these virtual machine images, using high-performance, post-process data deduplication to dramatically reduce the disk storage capacity required for backups versus standard disk storage.

ExaGrid and Symantec Backup Exec

Symantec Backup Exec is the gold standard in Windows data recovery, providing 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. It also supports single-drive libraries, encryption, and disaster recovery. High-performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection and recovery, and scalable management of local and remote server backups.

Organizations using Symantec Backup Exec can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Symantec Backup Exec, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Symantec Backup Exec, 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 or call us at 1-800-868-6985.