Savers Saves Time and Money with ExaGrid

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>
> **Charles Blair**
> **Sr. Systems Administrator**
> **Savers**

Customer Overview

Founded in 1954, Savers, Inc. is a privately held for-profit international thrift store chain with 222 locations in the United States, Canada and Australia. Also known as Value Village in the western United States and Canadian provinces (and as Village des Valeurs in Quebec), the company benefits more than 120 local non-profit organizations by purchasing and reselling donated items. The result has been over one billion dollars directly paid to non-profit organizations. The company employs 11,000 people in 23 states, 10 Canadian provinces and Australia, and is headquartered in Bellevue, Washington.

Search for New Approach to Backup Leads to ExaGrid

The IT department at Savers decided to look for a new solution after learning that the tapes and tape library the company used would no longer be supported by the vendor. Instead of purchasing a new tape library and switching to another tape format, Savers' IT department took the opportunity to research disk-based backup solutions in hopes that the company could reduce its reliance on tape and improve its backup processes.

"Tape served our needs for a while but it was messy. Each night, we backed up our data to tape and then produced secondary copies to send offsite. In retrospect, we were spending a lot of time managing and administering tape that could have been better spent on more productive things," said Charles Blair, senior systems administrator for Savers. "In addition, our backup times were extremely long. We really needed to address our backup times and disk-based backup seemed like the best way to do that."

Savers eventually chose a disk-based backup solution from ExaGrid after considering solutions from several competing solutions. The ExaGrid system is located in the company's main datacenter and works along with its existing backup application, CommVault Galaxy™.

"We did a lot of research into how the different disk-based backup products worked with our backup application and identified some potential performance issues that weren't easily clarified by the other vendors. After talking at length with ExaGrid, we were confident in the integration between the ExaGrid system and CommVault. Now that the system is up and running, we can report that the two products work together seamlessly," said Blair.

Data Deduplication Speeds Restores, Maximizes Disk Space

A major consideration in choosing the ExaGrid system was its approach to data reduction. Blair noted that Savers liked the fact that the ExaGrid provides 2:1 compression for the last backup and deduplication for previous backups to ensure the fastest restore speed possible and to maximize disk space.

"We viewed the fact that the ExaGrid compresses the most recent backup and keeps it in the landing space as a huge advantage because in an emergency we could restore data quickly without the overhead of reversing the deduplication process," said Blair. "Restoring data from the ExaGrid system is far, far faster than restoring from tape. Our users have been thrilled with how quickly we can restore files."

Savers backs up a wide range of data, including flat files, and SQL and Exchange databases, and has been experiencing data deduplication rates as high as 30:1. The company is able to retain up to 3 months of data on the system.

EXAGRID™

ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication processes data after it has landed on the system, ensuring the fastest backup times possible. 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.

Backups Reduced from 24 hours to 8 hours

Since installing the ExaGrid system, Savers has seen a significant reduction in its backup times. Some nightly backup jobs had been exceeding 24 hours with tape, but all backups are now completed within 8 hours using the ExaGrid. The ExaGrid system is backed up to tape each night and tapes are sent out daily to the company's disaster recovery center.

"Installing the ExaGrid system immediately took care of half our tape problem, and we were able to cut our backup times even further using CommVault's synchronous tape copy feature to send the data to tape immediately," said Blair. "We are also considering adding a second ExaGrid system to replicate data so that we can reduce our tape usage even further or even eliminate it altogether."

Savers can choose to add a second ExaGrid system at any time to replicate data and improve its disaster recovery operations. ExaGrid is cost effective when a two-site system is used because its data deduplication technology moves only changes between sites, minimizing the amount of bandwidth needed.

As the company's data grows, the ExaGrid system can easily scale to back up additional data. 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 60TB 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.

"The ExaGrid system was far more scalable than some of the other systems we looked at. Other systems we considered simply weren't scalable at all. We sized our system to account for data growth, but it's nice to know that we can easily add capacity by plugging in additional units," said Blair.

Easy Setup and Administration, Superior Customer Support

"ExaGrid comes packaged as a turnkey appliance and was designed to be easy to deploy and manage and to deliver maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components. All components are fully supported by ExaGrid's trained, in-house engineers dedicated to individual accounts. "We've been very impressed with ExaGrid's simplicity. We have a fairly lean IT staff here and don't have a whole lot of extra time to take care of high maintenance devices. The ExaGrid was very easy to set up and it's easy to administer. We've also had a good experience with ExaGrid's customer support. Whenever we have questions, we are able to reach them immediately, and have found the support staff helpful and knowledgeable," said Blair. "Using the ExaGrid system is leaps and bounds beyond tape. It has taken a great deal of the burden out of our day-to-day backup procedures."

ExaGrid and CommVault Galaxy

CommVault Galaxy Backup and Recovery software contains extensive capabilities to simplify the management of backup media resources. Galaxy software writes backup data to a broad collection of storage devices, including disk as a media target. This ability to write to magnetic disk as a functional equal of all other media types while exploiting the random access nature of the disk media sets Galaxy software apart.

Organizations using Galaxy can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Galaxy, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Galaxy, 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 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.