# Underwriter Ensures More Efficient Backups with ExaGrid

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>
> **Michael Horan**
> **Systems Engineer**
> **Victor O. Schinnerer & Co.**

## Customer Overview

Victor O. Schinnerer & Company, Inc. is one of the largest and most experienced underwriting managers of professional liability and specialty insurance programs in the world. The Schinnerer Group currently handles nearly $500 million in premiums on behalf of several insurance carriers and through a large network of over 9,600 active brokers. Schinnerer offers a number of lines of coverage across several professional disciplines, issuing over 46,000 policies. The company is based in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

## Fast Data Growth Led to Long, Difficult Backups

Schinnerer's IT staff had been grappling with the ramifications of fast data growth for some time. An increase in business, new application deployment, a move to virtualization, and the expanded use of its imaging system all contributed to rampant data sprawl, leaving the company's IT staff struggling to keep up with backup jobs.

Schinnerer had been backing its data up to a tape library located in the company's main datacenter and to smaller units in satellite offices, but backup times were long and the process was difficult. In an effort to make backups more efficient, the company purchased a storage-area network to front-end the tape library, but backup times still continued to grow.

"We had a number of initiatives that all collided and led to explosive data growth," said Michael Horan, systems engineer for Schinnerer. "Our backup windows kept getting longer and longer, and eventually we weren't really able to get full backups over the course of a weekend. Also, we had virtualized part of our environment and were having difficulty backing up snapshots efficiently to tape. We finally decided to look for a more complete solution capable of backing up all our data in a timely fashion."

## Two-Site ExaGrid System Delivers Faster Backups, Dedupe Ratios as High as 25:1

After looking at several different backup approaches, Schinnerer narrowed down the field to solutions from ExaGrid and EMC Data Domain. The company eventually chose a two-site ExaGrid disk-based backup system with data deduplication and moved to a new backup application, Symantec NetBackup. Data is automatically replicated each night between the ExaGrid system located in Schinnerer's main data center and a second system located at the company's disaster recovery site.

"The ExaGrid system offered powerful data deduplication technology, and we liked its post-process dedupe method. We felt that the ExaGrid system would deliver faster backups because the data is sent to a landing zone first and then deduplicated," said Michael. "We've been able to reduce our backup times and the amount of time we spend managing backups while improving disaster recovery with the two-site ExaGrid system."

Michael said that since installing the ExaGrid system, Schinnerer has been able to back up significantly more data while keeping backup times under control.

"Our data has grown tremendously since installing the ExaGrid system, but we're still able to keep our backup windows in check," he said. "We've had the ExaGrid system up and running for approximately two years, and in that time, our backup data has grown from 2TB to 24TB. Our 2TB backups were taking over 48 hours to complete with tape, and now we're able to back up 24TB in the same amount of time."

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. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

"We've been very impressed with ExaGrid's deduplication. We're currently seeing overall deduplication ratios of 12:1 to 16:1 but have some jobs running as high as 25:1. The effective data deduplication enables us to keep three months of retention on the system," Michael said.

According to Michael, remote restore is something else he's been quite pleased with. "On one occasion, I needed to perform a complete system restore after hours from home. Simply put, I didn't have to drive in to the office, locate a backup tape and wait for the tape library to spin. Instead, I was able to remote in to our network, launch NetBackup, and simply select the backup set stored on the ExaGrid. The system completed the restore in less than an hour, and I never had to leave the house!"

## Easy Setup, Proactive 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 dedicated to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

"I worked with the ExaGrid engineer assigned to our account to install the system. It was easy to set up and simple to organize our backup jobs within NetBackup," said Michael. "ExaGrid's customer support engineer is very proactive. He periodically connects into the system via WebEx to check things out, update the firmware, and ensure that things are running smoothly."

## Scalability to Handle Future Growth

Michael said that Schinnerer sized the ExaGrid system to handle the company's projected data growth, but he's pleased that the ExaGrid system will scale up if more capacity or performance is needed in the future.

## 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**.

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 130TB 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 is highly scalable, and we're confident that we will be able to easily expand it to meet our needs well into the future," he said. "Installing the ExaGrid system has streamlined our backup processes, reduced our reliance on tape, and improved our ability to recover from a disaster. We've been very happy with the solution."

## ExaGrid and Symantec NetBackup

Symantec 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 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 zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. 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 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.**