

Service Partners Slashes DR Time by over 75% with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Chris Chapin
Systems Administrator
Service Partners

Customer Overview

Service Partners, headquartered outside of Richmond, Virginia, is the largest distributor of residential fiberglass insulation and related contractor accessories in North America. Through its network of distribution centers, the company supplies a wide variety of building products and materials to thousands of contractors and retailers nationwide. Since its inception in 1998, Service Partners has completed over 40 acquisitions to better service its customers.

Long Backup Times, Lack of Retention with Tape

Service Partners had been backing up to tape but as their backups continued to exceed their backup window, the company decided to look for a new backup solution to both alleviate growing backup window as well as improve retention.

"We had been backing up to tape but it was a hassle all around. The biggest issue we had was our backup times, which were running more than 12 hours and exceeding our backup window," said Chris Chapin, systems administrator at Service Partners. "In addition, dealing with tape was a pain. We were managing several different types of tape, tape libraries and other devices, and it was problematic to say the least. We began looking at disk-based solutions and quickly narrowed down the field to EMC Data Domain and ExaGrid."

ExaGrid Integrates Easily into Existing Environment

Chapin said that after comparing the two solutions, Service Partners chose the ExaGrid system based on its data deduplication technology, tight integration with Symantec Backup Exec, and scalable GRID architecture.

The ExaGrid system works along with the company's existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec, to back up and protect its entire environment, including Exchange data, file shares, and its Oracle OneWorld ERP system.

"Seamless integration with Backup Exec was extremely important for us, and the two products work beautifully together. We have a significant investment in Backup Exec, and we didn't want to move to a new solution. It also ensures compatibility with our older tapes," Chapin said.

Backup Times Reduced, Improved Disaster Recovery

Chapin said that since installing the ExaGrid system, Service Partners has been able to reduce backup times from twelve hours to seven hours, and replication to its disaster recovery site is far more efficient than it was with tape. Recovery time has been improved as well.

"Our backups run so much faster now, and our replication time has been cut as well. Since installing the ExaGrid system, one of the biggest areas of improvement has been in disaster recovery. We can now do multiple restores at once, whereas in the past we've only been able to perform two at a time. We've been able to cut the amount of time that it will take to completely recover from a disaster from 60 hours down to just 12," said Chapin.

Data Deduplication Maximizes Amount of Data Stored

"ExaGrid's data deduplication technology has done a wonderful job at reducing our data. We're currently receiving data deduplication ratios as high as 28:1 for our Exchange data. Overall, we're able to keep over 70TB of data in 9.7TB of disk space," he said.



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.

Reduced Management and Administration Takes Load off IT Staff

Chapin said installing the ExaGrid was an easy process, and the system was up and running within an hour. The system is far easier to manage than tape, too.

"The ExaGrid system was easy to install, and ongoing management is a breeze," he said. "We've reduced the amount of time it takes to manage backups to almost nothing. We used to spend an hour a day or more managing tapes and backup-related issues. Now, it takes us only five minutes to check the logs each day."

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.

"ExaGrid's customer support staff has been wonderful. They're easy reach and are extremely knowledgeable about the product," said Chapin. "The system itself is rock-solid. It's run virtually trouble-free since the beginning."

GRID Architecture Provides Scalability without Forklift Upgrade

As the company's data grows, the ExaGrid system can easily scale to accommodate more 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 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.

Chapin said, "We love the fact that the ExaGrid system is so scalable. We can easily expand it without looking at a forklift

upgrade. Its GRID architecture will enable us to easily add additional capacity without replacing the entire system."

Chapin said that the ExaGrid system has eliminated the hassles of tape and the amount of time he spends each day on backups.

"The ExaGrid system has enabled us to really streamline our backups. I love its speed, reduced management and administration time, and the fact that I don't have to bother with tapes anymore. It's a terrific backup solution," he said.

ExaGrid and Symantec Backup Exec

Symantec Backup Exec provides 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. High-performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection 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 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.