

Seton Hill University Eliminates Tape, Speeds Backups with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



Seton Hill
UNIVERSITY

"We never could have backed up the amount of data we're generating now with tape. We looked carefully at solutions from ExaGrid and Data Domain and were immediately impressed by ExaGrid's price/performance. The ExaGrid system was far more cost-effective than the Data Domain, and we liked its approach to data deduplication as well as the customer support model. ExaGrid's customer support is second to none."

Daniel Mills
Programmer/Systems Analyst
Seton Hill University

Customer Overview

Founded by the Sisters of Charity in 1885 in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, Seton Hill started out as a small liberal arts college for women. It has since grown into a 2,000-student coeducational university. Seton Hill is a Catholic university but embraces students of all faiths. Its mission is to educate students to think and act critically, creatively, and ethically as productive members of society, committed to transforming the world.

Revamped IT Strategy Required State-of-the-Art Backup Plan

Over the past few years, Seton Hill University has increased the role technology plays in education, both for students and for the university as a whole. Incoming students are required to have a MacBook laptop, and as of fall 2010 semester, each student receives an iPad as well. During the same timeframe, the IT staff revamped the university's entire network and installed a wireless network throughout the campus along with a new VMware infrastructure. To meet increased backup demands, the university began looking for a new backup solution to replace its aging tape library.

"The new technology initiatives we put in place generated a lot of additional data, and it was clear that our old tape backup solution would need to be replaced," said Daniel Mills, programmer/systems analyst at Seton Hill University. "As it was, we were having difficulty simply backing up our data each night because our backup times were pushing nearly 23 hours. We'd get to the point where we'd just have to stop the backup jobs and move on. We also had issues with tape drives failing, and of course, just handling tape was a nightmare. We never could have backed up the amount of data we're generating now with tape."

ExaGrid System Provides Superior Price/Performance, Eliminates Tape

"We looked carefully at solutions from ExaGrid and Data Domain and were immediately impressed by ExaGrid's price/

performance. The ExaGrid system was far more cost-effective than the Data Domain and we liked its approach to data deduplication as well as the customer support model," said Mills.

Seton Hill purchased a two-site ExaGrid system and installed one unit in its primary datacenter and a second in another building. The two systems work along with the university's existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec, and the university is planning to set up replication between the two systems in the coming months to provide disaster recovery.

"The ExaGrid system is integrated extremely well with Backup Exec, and the fact that we could stay with the same backup application really helped our learning curve," said Mills. "The ExaGrid fit right into our infrastructure. We used the same copy of Backup Exec and just created a different device within the software and pointed the backup jobs to the ExaGrid. We didn't have to change anything else."

Data Deduplication Ratio of 22:1 Makes the Most out of Disk Space

Mills said that ExaGrid's data deduplication technology helps to maximize the amount of data that the university keeps on the ExaGrid system. Currently, Seton Hill is seeing deduplication rates of 22:1.

"The ExaGrid system deduplicates our data at the byte level, so it's extremely effective.

EXAGRID[™]

We're able to keep twelve weeks of file and database information and eight weeks of mail data on the ExaGrid, so we have lots of retention," said Mills. "I can't even compare the restores to tape; they're extremely fast."

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 byte-level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Easy Installation, Superior 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.

"Installation was a breeze. As a matter of fact, I set the system up myself and then saw in the instructions that I was supposed to call into support," Mills said. "Our customer support engineer just checked things out to make sure that I had done the installation properly, and we were up and running. ExaGrid's customer support is second to none. I love the fact that we have a dedicated engineer who knows us and knows our environment."

Mills said that since installing the ExaGrid system, backups are considerably faster than they were with tape and the university is able to now properly back up all its data.

"We were having some significant issues backing up our data to tape, and our backups were taking over 23 hours. Now, we're able to back up all our data in less than eight hours. It's simply amazing," he said. "I'm also saving a tremendous amount of time just managing and administering backups. I used to spend twenty minutes or more each day transporting tapes back and forth between buildings and I'm saving countless hours because I no longer have to troubleshoot backup issues. The ExaGrid has taken the hassle out of our backups."

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.

Scalability to Meet Future Needs

As Seton Hill's backup needs grow, 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 100TB 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.

"ExaGrid's GRID architecture will enable us to grow the system as our backup requirements grow and we can simply add additional units to scale up," said Mills. "The ExaGrid system was the perfect fit for our environment. It was cost-effective, worked with our existing backup application and we were able to eliminate tape. We've been very happy with the solution."

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.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid is a cost-effective, scalable disk-based backup solution that replaces tape in your nightly backup process, enabling faster and more reliable backups at a price comparable to a new tape library. ExaGrid offers the only disk backup appliance with data deduplication purpose - built for backup that leverages a unique architecture optimized for performance, scalability and price.

The ExaGrid system is a plug-and-play disk backup appliance that works with existing backup applications. ExaGrid's patented zone-level deduplication technology minimizes the amount of data to be stored by storing only the unique bytes across backups instead of storing the redundant data. This unique approach reduces the amount of disk space needed by a range of 10:1 to as high as 50:1 or more, delivering unparalleled performance in a cost-effective solution.

For more information about ExaGrid, please visit us at www.exagrid.com or call us at 1-800-868-6985.