

S3 Backs up Critical Research Data to ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Phil Sherrill
Systems Analyst
Social & Scientific Systems

Customer Overview

Social & Scientific Systems (S3) is a global business that was founded in 1978 and is based in Silver Spring, Maryland. S3 provides research, information technology, and clinical support to public and private sector programs including epidemiology contracts for the National Institutes of Health.

Vital Research Relied on Tape Storage

Social & Scientific Systems, Inc. (S3) is a health research company that provides technical, research, and program management services for public and private sectors. S3 had service-level agreements with the National Institutes of Health and with epidemiology researchers that rely on the data to keep 60 days' retention onsite for quick data recovery. S3 was backing up almost all the research data to tape, with daily differentials taking anywhere from 20 minutes to up to four hours. The queue of weekend full backup jobs would start Friday night. Start times for the remaining jobs in the queue were staggered anywhere from Saturday to Monday. Depending on the backup job, it could take the whole weekend to back up.

According to Phil Sherrill, systems analyst at S3, "While we were backing up some parts of the data to a SAN, it was backed up mostly to tape. We were doing differential backups nightly, full backups on the weekends, and an archive job on the first Saturday of every month. Those tapes were taken out of rotation and sent to long-term offsite archival storage for six months. After six months, we rotated them onsite to a two-hour rated fire safe. Our total data retention was 60 days onsite."

Poor Scalability of Tape Storage Results in a Win for ExaGrid

S3 had purchased a new LTO-5 deck to augment a few older LT02 and LT03

autoloaders. Despite the recent purchase of the newer tape technology, they were trying to decide whether to scale up the tape libraries or move forward with a disk-based backup system. Due to data growth over time, S3 began looking for ways to reduce the amount of backup data they had to store and protect.

According to Sherrill, "We started doing analysis on the data and noticed patterns in the data that indicated a lot of data redundancy. We started looking for a solution to eliminate redundancy because it costs a lot of time and money to back all that up to tape." S3 looked at many options, including Data Domain appliances, before selecting an ExaGrid disk-based backup with data deduplication appliance.

Quick and Simple Installation, World-Class Customer Support

According to Sherrill, "The installation process was really simple. I just logged in, assigned local IP addresses, and got it onto the network. Within an hour, I had it up and running, was creating shares and actually running tests on it. As far as just talking to technical support, the documentation was accurate and I had no issues with the ExaGrid appliance out of the box. The few times I've had to call support, I generally reach my designated support contact."

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.

Reduced Storage Requirements and Less Time Spent Managing Backups

Since implementing the ExaGrid appliance for backups, S3 has reduced storage space requirements on SQL data by 28:1, and is able to store 685GB of data in 23GB of disk space. Storage space requirements have been reduced by about 5:1 on pre-compressed data including video and audio. S3 has a disaster recovery site located in Virginia and plans to deploy a second ExaGrid appliance for data replication.

According to Sherrill, "Backup windows have been reduced by about 70 percent. Instead of staggering backup jobs to tape, I can have Symantec Backup Exec start the backup jobs all at one time. Our weekend fulls start on Saturday night at 8:00PM and usually end sometime Sunday afternoon, with 90% or more completed."

"Having an ExaGrid appliance has had a big impact on how much time I'm involved with doing backups. With ExaGrid, I don't have to deal with tapes on a weekly basis. Instead, we run archives once a month at night. That means that I'm not busy first thing Monday morning, retrying failed jobs from the weekly fulls and I'm not in work Sunday morning. All I have to do is to monitor backups to make sure they run. I don't have to deal with any more tape," he continued.

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.

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.

According to Sherrill, "We back up using Symantec Backup Exec and vRanger Pro. It was a big plus factor that ExaGrid would work with both NetBackup and Backup Exec. Another major pro was the fact that I could create shares over those typical backup applications."

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.