

Spackenkill Union Free School District Gives ExaGrid High Marks for Backups

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



"The ExaGrid has proven to be a real time saver. We were able to streamline our backup processes and cut our backup times in half. Also, our restores are much, much faster now. Restoring data from tape used to take hours, but it takes just minutes with the ExaGrid."

Brett Hasbrouck
Network Specialist
Spackenkill School District

Customer Overview

The Spackenkill Union Free School District was chartered by the New York State Legislature in 1865 and is one of the few remaining union free school districts within the state. The district educates nearly 2,000 students each year and is located in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Tape Management Difficult for Forward-thinking School District

The Spackenkill School District is a highly regarded district in New York known for its innovative use of technology. The district experienced rapid data growth over the past few years as its IT department rolled out new technologies such as electronic white boards and handheld student response systems in each of its four buildings. Each server across the district's network was equipped with a drive for backups, and the IT staff relied on non-technical personnel in each building to change and manage the tapes on a daily basis. However, managing multiple tapes each day had become difficult and problematic, and the district began looking for a new solution to make daily backups easier.

ExaGrid Fit Easily into Existing Network, Improved Backup Processes

At first, the district's IT staff considered moving its backups to straight disk but realized that retention would eventually become an issue without data de-duplication technology.

After looking at several different approaches to backup, the district chose ExaGrid's disk-based backup system. The ExaGrid is located in the district's main datacenter and works alongside its existing backup application, Symantec's Backup Exec™.

"The ExaGrid system was an ideal solution for us. It was the most cost-effective system we looked at and had the de-

duplication and scalability we needed," said Brett Hasbrouck, network specialist at the Spackenkill School District. "In addition, the ExaGrid fit right into our network and worked with our existing backup application so we were able to preserve our investment in Backup Exec."

Data De-duplication Reduces Data, Makes System Cost-effective

ExaGrid's data de-duplication helps the district reduce the amount of data it stores on the system and made the system more cost-effective than simply backing up to straight disk.

"ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication is extremely effective at reducing our data," said Hasbrouck. "We didn't need to buy a huge system to accommodate our data and we have plenty of room for growth. The data de-duplication technology made the system more cost effective to purchase initially and will make it less expensive to use over time than other solutions we looked at."

ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with data de-duplication, 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 de-duplication is performed post-process after the data is stored to reduce data. When a

EXAGRID™

second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Improved Backup Processes, Backup Times Cut in Half

"The fact that we don't have to worry about tapes any more is tremendous. We know that our backups will be completed each and every night and we don't have to think about changing tapes or tapes failing," said Hasbrouck.

"We were also able to redesign our backup processes to make them more efficient. We had been performing full backups on all of our systems each night, but we're so confident with the ExaGrid system that we have moved to performing incrementals during the week."

Prior to installing the ExaGrid system, the district had been performing full backups nightly on each of its servers over the course of four to six hours.

Since installing the ExaGrid system, the district now performs incremental backups during the week and full backups each weekend. Nightly incremental backups now take only thirty minutes, and full backups between two to three hours.

"The ExaGrid has proven to be a real time saver. We were able to streamline our backup processes and cut our backup times in half," said Hasbrouck. "Also, our restores are much, much faster now. Restoring data from tape used to take hours, but it takes just minutes with the ExaGrid."

Scalability to Meet Future Needs

The district has seen its data grow in the past few years along with its new technology initiatives, so system scalability was a critical factor in choosing a disk-based backup system.

"The ExaGrid system can easily meet our backup needs today and its high degree of scalability means that it can grow with us in the future as we roll out new technologies within the district," said Hasbrouck. "We know that we can easily add more capacity on to the ExaGrid system to accommodate future backup demands."

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 was easy to set up and is easy to maintain. There wasn't a big learning curve at all," said Hasbrouck. "It really has taken the pain out of our backups and it's a very flexible solution. Not only can we scale it up to handle more data, we can also add a second system to replicate data offsite at some point in the future."

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 byte-level data de-duplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication 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.