Suffolk Federal Credit Union Reduces Expenses, Long Backup Times with ExaGrid

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> **Brian Downs**
> **Systems Administrator**
> **Suffolk Federal Credit Union**

Customer Overview

Suffolk Federal Credit Union (SFCU) is a not-for-profit financial cooperative chartered in 1967 by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), and is owned and operated by its members. The volunteer-directed credit union, with assets in excess of $800 million, has six retail branches and over 60,000 members. SFCU membership is open to anyone who lives, works or worships in Suffolk County, New York.

Long Tape Backups, Difficult Restores

Long backup processes and difficult restores were commonplace for the IT department at Suffolk Federal Credit Union (SFCU). The credit union was struggling to back up its Windows data because full backups often took over a week and nightly backups were exceeding its backup window. In addition, restoring data was a complex, time consuming process.

"Our backup and restore processes simply weren't efficient. It was getting harder and harder for us to get our backups completed and restores were a total nightmare. We were also concerned about our ability to quickly recover from a disaster because our backup data was so old," said Brian Downs, systems administrator at Suffolk Federal Credit Union. "We needed a new approach that could speed up our backups and restores and improve disaster recovery."

ExaGrid Provides Tight Integration with Backup Exec, Deduplication for Reducing Amount of Data Stored

After looking at several different disk-based backup solutions, SFCU decided to purchase the ExaGrid disk-based backup system with data deduplication. The ExaGrid system works in conjunction with the credit union's existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec.

"We knew we wanted to go to a disk-based solution and investigated lots of different options. We soon realized that one of the key components we needed was strong data deduplication technology to help us reduce the amount of data stored. We liked ExaGrid's deduplication approach and we also liked the fact that it works with Backup Exec. The two products are tightly integrated and it made the transition easier," said Downs. "Since installing the system, we're seeing deduplication ratios as high at 28:1 for our SQL data."

ExaGrid's data deduplication technology delivers dedupe rates as high as The ExaGrid system 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 Reliance on Tape, Improved Disaster Recovery

Currently, the ExaGrid system is backed up to tape but the credit union recently purchased a second unit for disaster recovery. Once the second system is in place, data will be automatically replicated each night between the main datacenter and the disaster recovery site and the credit union will be able to significantly reduce its reliance on tape.

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"As a financial institution, we will always have to rely on tape to some degree for long-term data storage but once we install the second system, we'll be able to reduce tape to a minimum," said Downs. "Having data replicated to a second site will give us peace of mind that our data is safe, secure and accessible in case of a disaster. It will also take a tremendous load off of our IT staff because we will be able to minimize the amount of time we spend on backing up to tape."

Downs said that the credit union used to spend anywhere from $5,000 to $10,000 on tape costs each year, but tape expenses have been reduced significantly since installing the ExaGrid. In addition, IT staff time devoted to managing backups has also been reduced from approximately 15 hours a week to just a few hours.

"Our tape costs are now a fraction of what they were. However, the biggest advantage is that we've recovered the staff hours we used to spend on managing and troubleshooting backups. With tape, we were running one backup job at a time and if anything failed during the process, we would have to redo the whole backup. It took a tremendous amount of time," said Downs. "Now, we're able to run backup jobs concurrently and if a job fails for some reason, everything else keeps running. The whole process is driven by our backup policy, and so when the ExaGrid finishes, the backup data gets copied to tape. It's very hands-off."

Fast Deployment, Superior Customer Support

Downs said that he was able to install the ExaGrid system in under an hour.

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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 approach is wonderful. We have a dedicated engineer who calls us often to check in and to give us updates. He's extremely proactive and helpful and when we call in with a question, he responds quickly," said Downs. "ExaGrid rates at the top of the list in terms of vendor support."

Scalability to Meet Increased Demands

As the credit union's backup demands increase, the ExaGrid system can easily be expanded 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.

"The ExaGrid system is extremely flexible and we like the fact that it can scale to meet our needs," said Downs. "We've been very happy with the system. It has improved the speed of our backups and restores and cut our tape costs. The best part is that it saves our IT staff a tremendous amount of time. The time we used to spend on troubleshooting backups can now be spent on other things."

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.

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