

Vermont State Employees Credit Union Speeds Backups and Restores, Improves Data Security with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Steve Koenemann
CIO
VSECU

Customer Overview

The Vermont State Employees Credit Union (VSECU) is a not-for-profit financial cooperative, which offers a full range of affordable financial products and services to its member-owners. People eligible to join the credit union include anyone who lives or works in Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Lamoille, Orange, Rutland and Washington counties, along with Vermont's state employees and their families. VSECU is based in Montpelier, Vermont.

Missed Backup Windows Affected Server Performance

As with most financial institutions, it's critical that VSECU's backups be completed on time each and every night to ensure that data is properly protected and its systems operate at peak performance. However, the credit union's backup jobs were regularly exceeding the backup window because its tape library couldn't handle the demand.

"We have some fairly tight backup windows and it's critically important that our backups be completed within the allotted time each and every night," said Steve Koenemann, CIO of Vermont State Employees Credit Union. "But with our tape library, we were constantly pushing up against our eight hour backup window. In fact, our month-end backups could take as long as 19 hours. Fortunately, our network was never affected, but in some cases the performance on some of our servers suffered."

ExaGrid Delivers Fast Backups and Restores, Data Deduplication to Maximize Disk Space

After researching different approaches to backup, the IT staff at VSECU chose ExaGrid's disk-based backup solution. The ExaGrid system was installed in the credit union's datacenter in Montpelier and works along with its existing backup application, Symantec's Backup Exec.

"We did a lot of research on both disk-to-disk backup systems and tape libraries. The ExaGrid system clearly stood out because it offered high performance data deduplication and better scalability than other products," said Koenemann. "The ExaGrid was also extremely cost-effective and could work with our existing backup application."

Since installing the ExaGrid system, VSECU's backup times have been significantly reduced. All backup jobs are now completed within the credit union's

backup window, and backup jobs that had been taking as long as 19 hours to complete are now finished within four hours.

"We were immediately blown away by the performance we received from the ExaGrid system. Our backup jobs were occasionally taking 13 to 15 hours to complete each night, but the first time we sent it to the ExaGrid system it took just 36 minutes," said Koenemann. "We've also been very happy with the data deduplication performance. We are having no trouble at all meeting our retention goals, and because all of our data is available to us on disk, restores are far, far easier to do. We are saving a huge amount of time on restores alone."

ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication processes data after it has landed on the system, ensuring the fastest backup times possible. 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.

Improved Data Security

Data security was also a major concern for VSECU, because tapes were transported daily from to one of its other branches for safekeeping. Since installing the ExaGrid system, VSECU has been able to reduce the number of tapes produced and transported. The credit union is also considering adding a second ExaGrid system to eliminate tape even further. "As a financial institution, we handle lots of sensitive customer and financial information, so data security is critical to us.

Moving tapes around puts customer data at risk, and any time we can reduce the amount of tape we transport we enhance data security," said Koenemann. "One of the things we're seriously looking at is purchasing a second ExaGrid system to put at our disaster recovery site to provide data replication. Having two ExaGrid systems would raise our level of data security and enable us to recover from a disaster more easily than we could with tape."

Modular Design Ensures Scalability

One of the key reasons VSECU selected the ExaGrid system was its scalability. The ExaGrid system was way more scalable than many of the other solutions we considered. Several of the other systems we looked at would have enabled us to add disk capacity but not enhance the core system, so backup times would have increased as we added more data," said Koenemann. "The ExaGrid system's modular design will enable us to gain capacity by adding additional units, so we're also adding additional memory, processor disk and Gigabit Ethernet to ensure that we won't lose performance."

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.

Easy Installation and Management, Superior Customer Support

ExaGrid comes packaged as a turnkey appliance and was designed to be easy to deploy and manage and to deliver maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable

components. All components are fully supported by ExaGrid's trained, in-house engineers dedicated to individual accounts.

"The ExaGrid was fairly easy to set up and it's easy to manage. ExaGrid's customer support staff has also been very helpful. They have a great deal of knowledge in both Backup Exec and in the ExaGrid product and were a big help to us when we upgraded the system," said Koenemann. "We made the right choice with the ExaGrid system. It has increased the speed of our backups and restores, helped us raise our level of data security and reduced the amount of time and money we spend on tape."

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