

ExaGrid Makes the Grade at Westmont College

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Dr. Reed Sheard
Vice President and CIO
Westmont College

Customer Overview

Westmont College is an undergraduate, residential, Christian, liberal arts community which cultivates thoughtful scholars, grateful servants and faithful leaders for global engagement with the academy, church, and world. Westmont offers bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees in 26 liberal arts majors, 11 pre-professional programs, an elementary and secondary credential program, and up to 12 units for internships and practica. Located in Santa Barbara, California, Westmont College currently has nearly 1,400 students.

Failing IT Infrastructure Led to Slow, Inconsistent Backups

Westmont College's IT department had been struggling with its aging IT infrastructure for quite some time. In particular, backups were extremely difficult because the disk-to-disk-to-tape technology the college had in place couldn't keep up with increased demands and backups often failed. The college finally decided to remedy the situation shortly after hiring its first CIO in the school's history.

"When I came on board, the college's infrastructure was failing rapidly, especially in the area of storage. As a whole, the environment was fairly unstable, and it was beginning to affect the rest of the school," said Dr. Reed Sheard, vice president and CIO at Westmont College. "Backups were a big area of concern. We had been backing up our data using disk-to-disk-to-tape, but the process was long and backups were unreliable. We were also tired of dealing with tape. We finally decided the time was right to revamp our network and began to search for a new backup solution."

After considering several different backup solutions, Westmont College decided to purchase a disk-based backup system with data deduplication from ExaGrid. The ExaGrid system works along with the college's existing backup application, Symantec NetBackup.

"The ExaGrid system delivered the data deduplication, scalability, and integration with NetBackup that we were looking for in one hardware-based package," said Kevin Hess, senior director of information technology. "We knew that once our network

was running at peak performance, we would see an exponential increase in usage so we wanted to be sure that the backup solution we chose was scalable and incorporated intelligent data deduplication technology to reduce our data. The ExaGrid system has exceeded our expectations in all those areas."

Data Deduplication Approach Reduces Disk Space, Maximizes Efficiency

Hess said that since installing the ExaGrid system, Westmont College has been seeing data duplication ratios of 18.5:1 on average.

"The ExaGrid is extremely effective at reducing our data. It helps to make the most of our disk space," said Hess. "We also like its post-process approach. It ensures that our backups run as quickly as possible because the data isn't deduped until after it hits the landing zone."

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.

EXAGRID™

To maximize efficiency, the IT staff at Westmont College restructured its backup processes so that backup jobs are sent to multiple destinations on the ExaGrid system. Backup times for the college have been reduced from more than 24 hours to less than 10 hours.

Fast Installation, Easy Management and Administration

Hess said that members of the IT department installed the ExaGrid system themselves and found the process simple and straightforward. "Installation was a no-brainer. It took between two and three hours to get the system from the box to being fully configured and set up with NetBackup," he said.

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.

"The ExaGrid has been running smoothly since we set it up, and it requires very little user intervention. We don't have to log into the system to monitor it because it automatically notifies both our IT staff and our ExaGrid customer support engineer if there's a potential issue," said Hess. "The ExaGrid is an extremely stable system but if there's an issue, it's very easy to resolve. For example, we experienced a drive failure but were notified immediately and a new drive was shipped right out. We simply plugged in the new drive, and it was automatically recognized and integrated into the system. It couldn't have been more seamless."

According to Sheard, "We previously had a systems administrator who spent an entire day each and every week doing nothing but running and managing backups. The combination of the ExaGrid and retooling our backup software has eliminated that need. We now spend literally five minutes per week checking the system, and that's invaluable to us."

Scalability to Meet Future Backup Demands

"Since we revamped our network, our users are generating more and more data each and every day," said Sheard. "ExaGrid's GRID architecture will enable us to meet the demands of our environment well into the future because we can add capacity as we need it."

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.

"With the ExaGrid system, we have a high level of confidence in our backups. Before, our staff had been spending inordinate amounts of time managing backup processes that weren't always getting the job done," said Sheard. "Using the ExaGrid, our backups are completed without fail each and every night and don't require much intervention. It's been a pleasure to work with a system of such high quality with top-notch support to match. The system is virtually bulletproof."

ExaGrid and Symantec NetBackup

Symantec NetBackup delivers high performance data protection that scales to protect the largest UNIX, Windows, Linux and NetWare environments. With complete protection from remote office to center to vault, NetBackup offers a single console for all backup and recovery operations. Organizations using NetBackup can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as NetBackup, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running NetBackup, 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.

About Westmont

Westmont is one of seven colleges and universities named to the annual InfoWorld 100 Awards as one of 100 IT organizations that have "implemented and integrated technologies in innovative ways in pursuit of concrete business goals." Other InfoWorld 100 winners include the University of San Diego, George Washington University, Harvard Medical School, Purdue University, the University of Chicago Medical Center, and West Virginia University. Business winners include the Cleveland Indians, the New York Stock Exchange, Southwest Airlines, and the U.S. Army. For more information, visit www.westmont.edu.

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