Worcester Art Museum Chooses ExaGrid for Fast, Reliable Backups

Worcester Art Museum

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Mark Santora
Director of IS
Worcester Art Museum

Key Benefits:

- Backup window reduced by as much as 80% for incrementals
- Much less time spent managing and troubleshooting tape
- Backups are now 'trouble free'
- Flexible scalability provides for future expansion and disaster recovery protection
- Dependable and responsive customer support

Customer Overview

The Worcester Art Museum opened in 1898 and serves Worcester, Massachusetts and its regional community. With its encyclopedic collection of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, photography, prints, drawings, and new media, it is one of America's most respected art institutions.

Decision to Replace Tape Led to ExaGrid

The Worcester Art Museum was faced with replacing a pair of aging tape drives that lacked the capacity to back up and protect its 6TB of data.

"We were spending way too much time each day managing backups and were constantly juggling backup jobs and troubleshooting tape just to ensure all our data was protected," said Mark Santora, director of information systems at the Worcester Art Museum. "We finally began looking for a disk-based solution that could enable us to reduce our reliance on tape and improve backup times."

Santora said that the Worcester Art Museum decided to install an ExaGrid disk-based backup system with data deduplication after also looking at solutions from EMC.

"The ExaGrid system came highly recommended from our trusted reseller, and after talking with the team, we had a high level of comfort with the company and with the product," he said. "It was also cost effective and from a technical perspective, we liked the high level of integration between the ExaGrid system and our existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec."

Reduced Backup Times, Improved Reliability

Before installing the ExaGrid system, the museum was performing full backups to tape every night with backups running 14 to 20 hours. Since installing the ExaGrid system, the staff has been able to rework its backup processes to improve efficiency and now performs incremental backups each night and full backups each weekend. The ExaGrid is backed up to tape weekly and tapes are sent offsite in case they are needed for disaster recovery. Incremental backups are completed in two to three hours and weekly full backups, including backing the ExaGrid up to tape, run for only 26 hours over the weekend.

"For us, the biggest difference we've seen since installing the ExaGrid system has been the reliability of our backups and the amount of time we're saving in managing and troubleshooting tape. It's been a very reliable system and we don't have to worry about changing tapes or managing backups at all," said Santora

Scalable Solution, Option to Add Second System for DR

The Worcester Art Museum currently backs the ExaGrid system up to tape but is considering the possibility of purchasing a second system for disaster recovery in the near future.

"One of the things we like about the ExaGrid system is its flexibility, both in terms of the ability to add a second site for disaster recovery as well as the ability to expand the system to add capacity and performance," said Santora.

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, where each appliance contains processing power, memory, bandwidth, and disk. When the system needs to expand, additional appliance nodes are attached to the GRID, bringing with them additional processing power, memory, bandwidth, and disk. This

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type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows, and you are only paying for the amount of processing power, memory and bandwidth as you need it. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliance nodes are added to the GRID, the ExaGrid automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

Data Deduplication Reduces Amount of Data Stored

Santora said that ExaGrid's disk-based data deduplication technology helps to reduce the amount of data stored even though 60% of its data is images, which are compressed before being backed up.

ExaGrid combines standard compression along with zone-level 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. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology moves only the changes from backup to backup, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Experienced, Responsive Support

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 assigned to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

"From the very beginning, we've had a great experience with ExaGrid and its support team," said Santora. "Our initial configuration wasn't the easiest to set up because of the combination of jobs that needed to be scheduled, the conversion from full backups to incremental backups, and the duplication to tape, so we needed a lot of help in the beginning to get the system up and running. Our support engineer was not only by our side in the beginning, but he's been there ever since. Whenever I contact him with a question or concern, I receive an immediate response," he said.

According to Santora, installing the ExaGrid system has taken the hassle out of the museum's backup processes and has freed up the time he used to spend on backups to spend on other parts of his job.

"Installing the ExaGrid system has made a big difference in our day-to-day operations. Backups run faster and are trouble-free, and restores are faster also. We've been very happy with the system," he said.

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. It also supports single-drive libraries, encryption, and disaster recovery. High-performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection and recovery, 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 disk drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is far more cost effective than simply backing up to straight disk. 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 backing up to straight disk. 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.