Cheektowaga Central School District Deploys ExaGrid, Speeds Backups, Increases Reliability
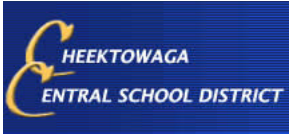
"The ExaGrid is incredibly reliable and it performs consistently each and every night. The system is rock solid, and we very rarely experience issues. I probably spend 75 percent less time managing and administering backups."

Colleen Eagen
Micro Computer Technical Support Specialist
Erie 1 BOCES assigned to the Cheektowaga CSD

Customer Overview

The Cheektowaga Central School District serves the town of Cheektowaga, New York. Located east of Buffalo, the District combines the personal attention of a small district with the educational opportunities of a large, diversified school district, providing the best of both worlds to its students. The District serves over 2,300 students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Long Backups with Tape Require Remedy

The Cheektowaga Central School District's IT staff began looking for an alternative to its tape backup system in an effort to remedy long backup times. On most nights, backups kicked off at 5:00 p.m. and ran all night and into the next morning, so there was no room for error.

"On a good day, our backups would run throughout the night and would be finished by the time we got in the next morning. However, the slightest hiccup would result in an incomplete backup because we would have to cancel the backup jobs before the school day began or the network would slow down significantly. The margin of error was incredibly thin," said Colleen Eagen, microcomputer technical support specialist for Erie1 BOCES assigned to the Cheektowaga Central School District. "I also spent a lot of time on the daily management of backups. We needed to find a solution that would enable us to get our backups successfully completed every night, and we needed to reduce the amount of time spent on management and troubleshooting."

ExaGrid Reduces Backup Window from 14 to 3 Hours

After evaluating alternatives, the District purchased an ExaGrid system with data deduplication. "We really liked the fact that the ExaGrid fit easily into our existing network, and we could also continue to use Symantec Backup Exec," said Eagen.

The ExaGrid system protects all the District's data, including student and faculty home directories, Lotus Notes, financial and accounting systems. The ExaGrid system is backed up to tape monthly.

Since installing the ExaGrid system, the District has seen its backup window reduced from 14 hours to 3 hours. "Our backups run so much faster now and we rest easy knowing that they will get completed each and every night," said Eagen. "The ExaGrid is incredibly reliable and it performs consistently each and every night. Now, instead of troubleshooting backups like I used to with tape, I just check the Symantec software to verify that all the backups were completed successfully. The ExaGrid is rock solid and we very rarely experience issues. I probably spend 75 percent less time than I used to managing and administering backups."

Eagen said that ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication dramatically reduces the amount of data that is backed up.

"The ExaGrid system does a great job at reducing the amount of data we back up and because it's all done in the background, I don't have to worry about it. The ExaGrid also has a much higher level of data integrity than tape. With tape, even if a backup was successful, it was possible that the data would be unavailable due to a corrupt tape. With the ExaGrid, I'm much more confident that the data will be there when and if I need it," said Eagen. "Also, restores are so much faster with the ExaGrid.

EXAGRID™

Restoring data from tape used to take hours. With the ExaGrid, restores take much less time."

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

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

"Setting up the ExaGrid system was incredibly simple. I started the install, and then ExaGrid's customer support team remoted in and guided me through the rest of the setup. It really was easy," said Eagen. "We've had the need to call in to customer support on a few occasions, and the support engineers are always accessible and very knowledgeable."

Expandable to Handle More Data

As the District's backup requirements grow, the ExaGrid system can easily expand 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 100TB 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.

"It's nice to know that we can scale the ExaGrid to handle more data. It's a very flexible system," said Eagen. "For me, the addition of the ExaGrid system has freed me up to focus on

other parts of my job. I have a high level of confidence in the system, and it has made my job easier."

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'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.

ExaGrid is the leader in cost-effective disk-based backup solutions. A highly scalable system that works with existing backup applications, the ExaGrid system is ideal for companies looking to quickly eliminate the hassles of tape backup while reducing their existing backup windows. ExaGrid's innovative approach minimizes the amount of data to be stored by providing standard data compression for the most recent backups along with byte-level data deduplication technology for all previous backups. Customers can deploy ExaGrid at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories or for disaster recovery.

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

About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

Customers worldwide depend on ExaGrid Systems to solve their backup problems–effectively and permanently. ExaGrid's disk-based, scale-out GRID architecture adjusts to increasing backup demands due to constantly growing data volumes. It is the only solution that combines compute with capacity as well as a unique landing zone to permanently shorten backup windows and eliminate expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at **www.exagrid.com**.

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