

City of St. Petersburg, FL Selects ExaGrid/Veeam Backup Solution, Reduces Backup Window by 85%

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



"ExaGrid is extremely reliable which is what we strive for in backup storage. ExaGrid has made my life so much easier."

Rock Mitich
Senior Server Analyst

Key Benefits:

- 50% time savings administering backup jobs
- Backup window reduced by 85%, from 80 to 11 hours
- Leveraged backup compatibility with partner site using ExaGrid
- Deduplication ratio demonstrates 11:1 results

Customer Overview

The City of St. Petersburg, Florida is where the sun shines on all who come to live, work, and play. The City attracts over 10 million tourists annually who enjoy a variety of sporting events from yacht races to baseball; visit an array of museums, galleries, and marine institutes; enjoy the City's festivals, historic neighborhoods, and much more. As the first "Green City" in Florida, tradition and innovation come together to create a vibrant sense of community.

Too Many Gigabytes to Back Up in a Day

Prior to ExaGrid, the City of St. Petersburg backed up to tape using Veritas NetBackup. As the City migrated its environment from physical to virtual, tape was no longer viable. According to Rock Mitich, senior server analyst at the City, there was simply too much data to back up in a day, and the limited number of tape drives made backup even more difficult. When the City replaced its server storage with a new storage array, they leveraged the old storage as the backup destination, which proved that the City could do disk backups faster, more frequently, and more reliably than when it relied solely on tape.

"The fact that we could do multiple jobs all at the same time, was great, but as things progressed, Veritas NetBackup just wasn't working – there were too many failures – so we decided that we'd migrate over to Veeam," said Mitich. "That wasn't an easy transition because we had done a lot of manipulation. During this process, we realized we needed help to minimize our footprint and gain efficiency. We had to look at compression and deduplication because we were wasting space with duplicate data. We didn't have enough disk space to back everything up, so we started looking at a dedupe solution. We tested several major storage/deduplication vendors and selected ExaGrid due to its cost effectiveness, completeness of solutions, and ease of use."

Today, the City of St. Petersburg backs up over 400TB of data across two sites. In addition,

the City continues to replicate that data to tape, but its long-term goal is to remove tape from its backup process.

Flexibility and No Forklift Upgrades

Mitich said that the City's decision to install ExaGrid was partly due to its flexibility. "The fact that we could split nodes across different physical locations – as well as upgrade from different sized nodes and integrate new ones while keeping the older ones running without a forklift upgrade – was a huge win."

Another major factor in St. Petersburg's decision to select ExaGrid was that Pinellas County Government, also where St. Pete is located, was already using ExaGrid.

Data Deduplication Reduces Amount of Data Stored

St. Petersburg's retention policy is 90 days, so it keeps full and daily backups for that period. St. Petersburg's environment is 95% virtualized, but it still has a handful of physical Windows machines being backed up using Veritas NetBackup.

"ExaGrid reporting proved we had a lot of redundancy, which is exactly what we were hoping for because a lot of the redundancy is due to operating system files from over 200 virtual machines. Our environment is super efficient now with ExaGrid, and we're getting average dedupe of 11:1," said Mitich.

EXAGRID

Drastic Backup Window Reduction

"I don't have to keep adding tapes and managing this process. In the last 90 days I don't think I've really added any tapes to the library because we are so efficient. I save at least 50% of my time managing backup. I now spend 15 to 30 minutes each day monitoring the ExaGrid dashboard and reviewing email alerts compared to one to two hours per day prior to this implementation," said Mitich.

Mitich stated that the City had physical servers that had about 8TB of total data and took almost 80 hours to back up using Veritas NetBackup. When he converted it to a virtual server, the backup window dropped to 46 hours, and now that he's backing it up using Veeam and ExaGrid combined, it's taking just under 11 hours to complete.

Simplified Daily Management

"My goal was to have a simple backup solution, and we're there. I check in to make sure everything is on track, but my day is no longer consumed with fear that backups didn't complete," said Mitich.

The ExaGrid system can easily scale to accommodate data growth. ExaGrid's GRID computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, appliances of any size or age can be mixed and matched in a single GRID system with capacities of up to a 1PB full backup plus retention and an ingest rate of up to 200TB per hour. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic. Management software notifies customers via SNMP or email that the system is reaching capacity thresholds.

Flawless Installation and 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.

About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides backup storage with a unique landing zone and scale-out architecture. The landing zone provides for the fastest backups, restores and instant VM recoveries. The scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable GRID and provides for a fixed-length backup window as data grows, eliminating expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at www.exagrid.com.

"The installation was flawless, and our assigned customer support engineer is awesome. ExaGrid is extremely reliable, which is what everyone strives for in backup storage; it's made life so much easier. We spend much less time dealing with backups than we did before, and our time can now be invested in other areas of IT," said Mitich.

Veeam-ExaGrid Dedupe

Veeam uses the information from VMware and Hyper-V and provides deduplication on a "per-job" basis, finding the matching areas of all the virtual disks within a backup job and using metadata to reduce the overall footprint of the backup data. Veeam also has a "dedupe friendly" compression setting, which further reduces the size of the Veeam backups in a way that allows the ExaGrid system to achieve further deduplication. This approach typically achieves a 2:1 deduplication ratio.

ExaGrid is architected from the ground up to protect virtualized environments and provide deduplication as backups are taken. ExaGrid will achieve a 3:1 up to 5:1 additional deduplication ratio. The net result is a combined Veeam and ExaGrid deduplication ratio of typically 6:1 to 10:1, which greatly reduces the amount of disk storage required.

GRID Architecture Provides Superior Scalability

"We don't grow that fast in terms of data, but it's important to know we can easily add an ExaGrid appliance to our GRID," said Mitich.

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, where each appliance contains not just disk but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. When the system needs to expand, additional appliances are simply attached to the GRID. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows, and you only pay for what you need when you need it. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliances are added to the GRID, the system automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

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