

Cross Country Home Services Delivers Operational Excellence with the Implementation of ExaGrid's Disk-Based Backup with Data Deduplication

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Chuck Matulik
Network, Systems and
Telecom Manager
Cross Country Home Services

Customer Overview

Cross Country Home Services (CCHS) is the leading provider of home warranties, home service plans and homeowner emergency assistance programs. For more than 25 years, CCHS has provided services for clients in the financial services, utility, insurance, membership, and real estate industries. Its programs reach tens of millions of homeowners each year, utilizing sophisticated direct mail, bill insert, telemarketing and database marketing techniques. Based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, CCHS is a member of the Cross Country Group, one of the largest privately-held providers of customer service programs in the United States.

Disk-Based Backup Evaluated to Shorten Backup Window, Better Secure Company and Client Data

At the heart of CCHS' business is the operational excellence on which the company prides itself. With three locations running 24/7, backups were becoming an increasing problem for CCHS, affecting the level of responsiveness the IT staff was able to provide to its internal customers as well as the reliability and timeliness of backups in general.

Prior to implementing the ExaGrid, CCHS had been backing up to tape. They began their nightly backup at 8:00 p.m., and all too often the backup would still be running at 8:00 a.m. the following morning.

Not only had backups become too time intensive, but restores had become increasingly challenging as well. Even if the data was on site, it would often take 20 to 30 hours to complete a restore. This window widened if the tapes had already gone off site to the CCHS tape storage vendor.

In addition, because CCHS is classified as an insurer under Federal regulations, the company is required to comply with the rules that govern the insurance industry. This includes a data retention requirement of seven years.

CCHS was faced with a number of problems to solve, and better, faster backups and restores – as well as regulatory retention

compliance – were the business imperatives they sought to address. The company had made the decision to migrate to Symantec Backup Exec as its backup application, so it required a solution that would integrate seamlessly with their application of choice.

As part of its due diligence and evaluation of alternatives, CCHS looked closely at ExaGrid and Data Domain, comparing the differences in approach to deduplication and scalability as well as price. It was important to the IT department that the chosen solution best supported their executive management team and internal customers, and reflected the high standard of quality service and support for which the company is known.

Business Benefits from Faster Backups, Reliable Restores, Efficient Retention

When CCHS studied its options, one of the features of the ExaGrid that the IT staff liked was the post-process deduplication. This made more sense to them from the standpoint of reducing traffic on their WAN, and since the data lands in its entirety prior to deduplication, not only is their data more secure, but a full non-deduplicated copy is readily available for speedy restores. ExaGrid's byte-level (versus block-level) approach to deduplication makes most efficient use of their disk space and therefore their budget. The fact that the system is scalable with no "forklift upgrades" and they can buy capacity as needed

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instead of incurring the expense before they need it also made good economic sense.

“Today is like night and day from where we were,” said Chuck Matulik, network, systems, and telecom manager. “Our backup window is down to eight hours, and our dedupe ratio is currently around 12:1. We’ve been able to redeploy the time we used to spend managing our tape backups to more important initiatives.” Matulik estimates that his staff used to spend on average four hours a day dealing with tapes. After installing the ExaGrid, they now spend just a few hours a week on backups. That’s about 20 hours per week – half an FTE – that can now be spent on other IT projects.

“After installing the ExaGrid, we had a virtual server crash,” said Matulik. “The restore took mere minutes – a pittance compared to what we would have had to do before, which would have taken four to six hours or more.”

Quick and Simple Installation, Terrific Customer Support

The IT staff at CCHS found the installation to be very simple, and they were able to configure it quickly. Matulik was pleased with the support he received from ExaGrid’s installation team. “The installation was very smooth,” said Matulik. “There was great interaction between ExaGrid’s installation engineer and each of our three locations. It was extremely painless to start backing up to the ExaGrid.”

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.

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.

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. ExaGrid appliances 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.