Greenwich Central School District Hits Capacity with EMC System and Replaces with ExaGrid

Customer Overview

The Greenwich Central School District enrolls 1,200 students in the towns of Greenwich and Easton, and portions of six other towns in Washington County, New York. The central campus contains an elementary school, middle school and a high school and employs 200 teachers and staff. The IT staff is responsible for maintaining the data center servers and systems throughout the district.

Data Growth Was Forcing a Forklift Upgrade for Existing EMC System

The storage needs of the Greenwich Central School District were about to grow too large for their existing EMC backup-to-disk system to handle. The volume of data from various application servers and databases, student and staff home folders, and their existing IT management suite was placing demands on the data center's existing backup system that were at or beyond its capacity.

According to Bill Hillebrandt, network analyst and director of information technology, "I knew that my backup data sets were growing, and by calculating the trend, I knew it was only a matter of months before I outgrew my EMC system."

Reducing Retention Provided Only Temporary Relief

Since the school district does not mandate a specific data retention policy, the IT staff had some flexibility to reduce retention in order to free backup disk space before the EMC system maxed out. This bought some time, but it was not a sustainable tactic in the long term. "I tried to maintain five days of backup on the disk-to-disk system before it went to tape because it's faster to restore from disk," Hillebrandt explained.

Frequent updates to the database at the start of a new school term significantly reduced the available backup disk space. According to Hillebrandt, "After the changes settled down a little bit, I could maybe get five to seven days of retention. I knew that I was going to have to start looking at another solution, one with larger capacity or with a little more intelligence. In the meantime, I had to reduce the retention period."

Looking for a Scalable Solution at a Reasonable Cost

Both Dell and EMC solutions were evaluated,

since they were very similar in function to the existing backup system. "Initially, I was going to go with Dell since they are an approved vendor. I was also considering keeping one unit in the building connected to fiber to do offsite storage for longer term backup. It was a very, very costly implementation to do that," he said.

"I knew that there were software solutions for data deduplication, including Symantec BackupExec, but I didn't know a lot about the hardware solutions that were available," said Hillebrandt. He called an ExaGrid reseller for guidance on other cost-effective backup options that would be suitable for the school district and after doing some additional research bought an ExaGrid system.

Data Deduplication Effectively Reduces Data and Enables Longer Retention

Deduplication performance was one of the determining factors in choosing ExaGrid rather than a solution from EMC or Dell. ExaGrid's unique deduplication approach reduces the disk space required for backups by up 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 then data deduplication is performed after the data is stored ("post-process") to reduce disk space requirements.

Hillebrandt noted deduplication ratios as high as 30:1 to 40:1 depending on the system and type of data being backed up. "If you're not getting good deduplication, you're essentially just piling in tons of duplicated data."

Easy Setup and Great 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

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>
> Bill Hillebrandt
> Network Analyst and Director of Information Technology
> Greenwich Central Schools

accounts. The system was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

According to Hillebrandt, "When I first got the unit, my Technical Support contact helped walk me through some of the preliminary setup. The documentation provided by ExaGrid was extremely well laid out and very concise. I didn't have to plow through a massive manual to find what was really relevant." Hillebrandt was able to quickly get the ExaGrid system set up and running on his own. He added, "I was able to handle some of the finer points of the Backup Exec software, even the fine tuning, by myself. I like that the ExaGrid solution is entirely focused on backups."

No Forklift Upgrade Required to Accommodate Data Growth

As Greenwich Central School District's backup needs continue to grow, the ExaGrid system can easily scale 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.

ExaGrid Delivered Peace of Mind and Reduced the Cost of Backup

The ExaGrid system has made a significant shift of time spent managing backups into other more productive tasks. "The

biggest impact is that I'm no longer concerned whether backups are getting done efficiently, or whether they're getting done at all. I don't have to worry every night whether I'm saving enough data if I have to recover anything."

Hillebrandt was very pleased with the entire sales process and the level of support provided by ExaGrid. "It's all very impressive. For what I was going to pay for getting one Dell or EMC device, I'll be able to buy two of the ExaGrid boxes. I'll be able to accomplish my offsite storage as well as my local storage for the cost of what it would have been for a single Dell EqualLogic box."

The problem of not having enough backup disk space available to accommodate data growth is solved. "Now I have about twenty five days retention and I still have 37% retention space available."

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