

Grow Financial Replaces Data Domain with ExaGrid to Avoid Forklift Upgrade and Speed Restores

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Dave Lively
Backup and Recovery
Systems Administrator
Grow Financial

Key Benefits:

- GRID scalability means credit union will never again face a forklift upgrade
- Quick restores since data doesn't need to be rehydrated as in the past
- Post-process dedupe provides much faster backups
- Less time managing backups results in more time for other more important priorities

Customer Overview

With twenty branches and three more in development, Grow Financial Federal Credit Union is recognized as one of the leading credit unions in the nation, and has \$1.9 billion in assets. Originally founded to provide a safe place to save and borrow money for the military and civilian personnel of MacDill Air Force Base, Grow Financial has since expanded membership to include employees of more than 1,100 businesses. Established in 1955, Grow Financial has its corporate headquarters in Tampa, Florida.

Data Domain System Reaches Capacity

When Grow Financial began running out of capacity on its Data Domain unit, the credit union decided to look at alternative solutions capable of delivering faster restore speeds and better scalability.

"Our Data Domain unit did a good job of performing basic backups, but it really fell short on restores," said Dave Lively, backup and recovery systems administrator at Grow Financial. "In our business, time is money, and downtime can be calculated in losses of thousands of dollars an hour. Ninety-nine percent of the time, we need to restore data from the most recent backup, but with the Data Domain unit, stored data had to be reconstituted and the recovery process was long and complicated."

Lively said that the credit union decided to replace the Data Domain unit after suffering through a few critical incidents where stored data couldn't be accessed quickly.

"We learned that ultimately, it's all about recovery speed. It doesn't matter how effectively the data is compressed if you can't access it when you need it," he said

ExaGrid Purchased for GRID Architecture, Post-process Data Deduplication

"We decided to purchase the ExaGrid system because its scalability and backup approach were superior to the Data Domain unit," Lively said. "ExaGrid's GRID architecture

enables us to expand the system as needed by plugging additional units into the GRID, and its post-process data deduplication method delivers faster restores because we can access data immediately from the unit's landing zone."

Grow Financial initially installed a single ExaGrid system in its Tampa headquarters and then expanded the system to include a unit in its disaster recovery site in Jacksonville. The systems have been scaled up to handle more backup data, and the credit union now has a total of three units in Tampa and three in Jacksonville. The ExaGrid systems work along with Veeam Backup & Recovery and EMC NetWorker to back up the credit union's servers and nearly 1,000 workstations.

"Scalability was a big concern when we began looking for a new backup solution. The Data Domain unit would have required a forklift upgrade to expand, but ExaGrid's GRID architecture enables us to simply add additional units to the GRID to improve capacity and performance," Lively said.

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, so when the system needs to expand, additional appliance nodes are attached to the GRID, bringing with them not only additional disk but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows. 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.



Faster Backups and Restores with Post-process Data Deduplication

Lively said that backups and restores are far more efficient with the ExaGrid system than with the credit union's old Data Domain unit. The ExaGrid system backs up data up directly to a landing zone, and once the backup job is complete and off the network, the most recent backup is cached and available for rapid restore. Data deduplication is performed after the backup process has been completed, resulting in faster backup times.

"In my experience, most restores are performed from the most recent backup. Unlike the Data Domain system, which had to rehydrate data for restores, we have immediate access to the most recent backup on ExaGrid's landing zone," he said. "With the ExaGrid, we can write a lot more parallel streams to the unit than we could with Data Domain. I attribute a lot of the performance gains to the fact that our old unit deduplicated the data as it was backing up, while the ExaGrid backs the data up to the landing zone and then dedupes it."

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.

Easy Administration, Superior Customer Support

Lively said that he finds the ExaGrid system reliable and easy to use. "The ExaGrid system is simple and straightforward, and there's a very small learning curve," he said. "The system itself is really stable and it runs extremely well, but if I do have a question or concern, I know I can count on our ExaGrid support engineer. We've been very impressed with our support engineer, and we have a high degree of confidence in his knowledge and experience."

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.

"I spend far less time managing the ExaGrid than I spent managing our Data Domain unit, and because of that, I can dedicate more of my energy to things like spotting trends or thinking about ways I can improve the efficiency of our backups," Lively said. "Installing the ExaGrid has given me peace of mind because I know that we can perform recoveries faster and if we need to expand the system, it's as easy as ordering another appliance and plugging it into the GRID."

ExaGrid and Veeam



The combination of ExaGrid's and Veeam's industry-leading virtual server data protection solutions allows customers to utilize Veeam Backup & Replication in VMware, vSphere, and Microsoft Hyper-V virtual environments on ExaGrid's disk-based backup system. This combination provides fast backups and efficient data storage as well as replication to an offsite location for disaster recovery.

The ExaGrid system fully leverages Veeam Backup & Replication's built-in backup to disk capabilities and ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication for additional data reduction (and cost reduction) over standard disk solutions. Customers can use Veeam Backup & Replication's built-in source-side deduplication in concert with ExaGrid's disk-based backup system with zone-level deduplication to further shrink backups.

ExaGrid and EMC NetWorker

EMC NetWorker provides a complete, flexible and integrated backup and recovery solution for Windows, NetWare, Linux and UNIX environments. For large datacenters or individual departments, EMC NetWorker protects and helps ensure the availability of all critical applications and data. It features the highest levels of hardware support for even the largest devices, innovative support for disk technologies, storage area network (SAN) and network attached storage (NAS) environments and reliable protection of enterprise class databases and messaging systems.

Organizations using NetWorker can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as NetWorker, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running NetWorker, 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.

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