Heil Trailer Moves Backups to ExaGrid to Gain Faster Backups and Restores

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David Duggan
Global Network Manager
Heil Trailer

Customer Overview

Heil Trailer International produces a complete line of tank trailers that carry petroleum, chemical, edible, dry bulk and waste products. Heil also manufactures specialty trailers focused on the heavy haul, oil field, and recovery niches. Heil trailers are marketed both directly and indirectly through distributors to customers in the construction, trucking, railroad, oil field, towing and recovery, and heavy haul industries, as well as to various government agencies, both domestically and internationally. Based in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Heil Trailer International has manufacturing facilities in the United States, Argentina and Thailand, as well as service facilities in the United States and the United Kingdom.

24-hour-Long Backup Leads to Search for Better Solution

Heil Trailer had experienced rapid data growth for years and had exhausted the capacity of its tape backup system. With backup jobs running around the clock, Heil's IT department had to deal with a whole host of issues related to its backups, including network congestion, performance degradation of its ERP system when writing to tape, tape availability, mechanical problems with tape and inefficient and unreliable restore processes. Because its manufacturing operations run 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, Heil doesn't have any true downtime on its network, and it's critical that backup operations not affect system performance.

With backups constantly running 24 hours-a-day, the IT department at Heil began looking for a new system that would speed its backups and make restores easier. At first, Heil considered upgrading to a new, state-of-the-art tape backup system but realized that it wasn't cost-effective and didn't provide all of the features its IT staff was looking for.

Heil Gains Faster, More Efficient Backups with ExaGrid at the Same Cost as Tape

"The initial cost of the tape system was less expensive than disk-based backup, but once we added in the cost of the tapes and spread it out over a three-year period,

we realized that we could get a disk-based backup system for the same amount of money," said David Duggan, global network manager for Heil Trailer International. "We believe Disk-based backup is simply faster and more efficient than tape."

After looking at disk-based backup products from ExaGrid, Quantum and Data Domain, Heil purchased two ExaGrid systems. The primary ExaGrid system is located in Heil's datacenter in Athens, TN, and a second system acts as a disaster recovery site and is located 45 miles away in its Chattanooga office.

The ExaGrid system works alongside Heil's existing backup application, Symantec's Backup Exec™.

ExaGrid Delivers 60:1 De-duplication Ratios

"ExaGrid is a well established player in the marketplace and we were impressed with its data de-duplication abilities," said Duggan. "Because ExaGrid performs data de-duplication at the byte level, it's more efficient than products with block-level data de-duplication. Also, ExaGrid performs the data de-duplication post-process instead of in-line so that backups and restores are faster."

ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with data de-duplication, 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,

EXAGRID™

delivering unparalleled cost savings and performance. ExaGrid delivers extremely fast backup performance because data is written directly to disk, and data de-duplication 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 de-duplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

"Because our facility is located in a rural area, getting the amount of bandwidth we need to connect the two sites together was a bit of a challenge. The fact that the ExaGrid system only moves changes across the network certainly made having a disaster recovery site more feasible because our replications are much, much smaller than they would have been without such effective data de-duplication," said Duggan. Since installing the ExaGrid system, Heil Trailer has experienced data de-duplication ratios of 50 to 60:1. Backup times have been reduced from an around the clock process to less than 12 hours for full backups, and the firm is now able to perform nightly incremental backups throughout the week, sometimes taking only an hour.

"We are now able to run a full backup on Fridays and our incremental backups can all run at one time. With our old tape system, we had to stagger our backups to make sure that we had tape availability," said Duggan. "Also, because we are better able to schedule our backups, we don't suffer any performance hits."

Easier SOX Compliance, Smooth Scalability

As a public company, Heil Trailer must adhere to Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) requirements, and Duggan has found that the ExaGrid system helps make compliance easier.

"Because we're not relying on tape, SOX compliance is easier because we can show exactly where our data is at all times electronically, so we don't have to do as much paperwork," said Duggan. "Also, we save a considerable amount of time because we're no longer dealing with tape. We don't have to transport tapes offsite, and our restores are incredibly fast because our data is on disk and available at a moment's notice."

In fact, Duggan estimates that backing up Heil's data to the ExaGrid system saves at least eight hours per week in staff time because they no longer have to manage or restore data from tape.

As a growing company, scalability is a critical consideration for any IT purchase Heil makes. 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 60TB. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

"We like the fact that we can easily scale the ExaGrid system in case we need to add capacity," said Duggan. "With the Data Domain and Quantum products, we would have had to purchase an entirely new system and alter our jobs to send them to two different sites. With ExaGrid, we can just add another ExaGrid system to our existing configuration and quickly increase the size of our system."

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 de-duplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication technology stores only the changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk space 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 is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, so organizations can retain their investment in existing applications.

ExaGrid can be used at a primary site and at a second site to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with a live data repository or for disaster recovery. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

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