Hunter Industries Speeds Backups with ExaGrid

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Jeff Winckler
Network Administrator
Hunter Industries

Customer Overview

Hunter Industries is one of the world's leading manufacturers of irrigation equipment for the landscape and golf course industries. From drip irrigation to controllers, sensors, and central controls, Hunter produces a complete spectrum of water-efficient products for commercial and residential applications. With more than 250 product patents and 40 trademarks to its credit, Hunter is considered the innovation leader in irrigation equipment. The company is based in San Marcos, California.

Aging Tape Library Delivered Long Backups, Slow Network Performance

Hunter's IT staff was finding it more and more difficult to back up data to its aging tape library. With backups running nearly 23 hours a day, the company's network was slow due to the constant traffic and the IT staff struggled to keep up with tape management chores.

"We weren't able to properly back up our information and the whole situation weighed heavily on our IT group. All in all, we were spending 15 hours per week on tape management and we still weren't able to keep up. We needed a state-of-the-art solution that could cut our backup windows and reduce our reliance on tape," said Jeff Winckler, network administrator for Hunter Industries.

Cost-Effective ExaGrid System Works with Popular Backup Applications, Delivers Effective Data Deduplication

After looking at several competing solutions, Hunter decided to purchase a disk-based backup system with data deduplication from ExaGrid. The ExaGrid system works with the company's backup application, CommVault Galaxy.

"ExaGrid's price point was phenomenal, and it was far more cost-effective than the other solutions we considered," said Winckler. "At the same time we purchased the ExaGrid, we also decided to look for a new backup application. We liked the fact that the ExaGrid system worked with all the leading backup applications so we could choose the one we felt was the best for our environment."

The strength of ExaGrid's data deduplication technology also was an important factor in the decision. "The other thing we really liked about the ExaGrid system was its approach to data deduplication.

ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication gives us the fastest possible backups because it compresses the data after it hits the landing zone. Some of the other solutions we looked at used inline data deduplication. We looked at both approaches and we concluded that inline data deduplication would negatively affect the speed of our backups," said Winckler.

ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication processes data after it has landed on the system, ensuring the fastest backup times possible. ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with 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.

EXAGRID™

Backup Times Significantly Reduced, Scalability for the Future

Winckler said that since installing the ExaGrid system, the company has seen its backup times greatly reduced. For example, Hunter's Notes® backups used to take 42 hours with tape, but they are now completed in seven hours or less with the ExaGrid.

"Our backups are now completed within our backup window and they're done consistently each and every night with the ExaGrid. I come in and check the ExaGrid every morning just to make sure everything backed up correctly and it's a rare to even have an error," said Winckler.

"The other area where the ExaGrid has made a tremendous difference is in restores. We used to cross our fingers and hope that the data was backed up and available every time we got a restore request. Now we are able to back up all of our data and we can restore a file in no time at all."

Currently, the company backs up the ExaGrid system to tape and sends the tapes offsite on a weekly basis. In the future, Hunter can add a second ExaGrid system offsite to replicate data and improve its ability to recover from a disaster.

"The ExaGrid system gives us the flexibility to add another system on for data replication at any point in the future," said Winckler. "We also like the fact that we can expand the capacity of the ExaGrid when we need to by adding on extra units. Some of the other solutions we looked at weren't scalable at all, but the ExaGrid will enable us to scale the system as our needs grow."

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 60TB 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.

Intuitive Interface, Superior Customer Support

ExaGrid comes packaged as a turnkey appliance and was designed to be easy to deploy and manage and to deliver maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components. All components are fully supported by ExaGrid's trained, in-house engineers dedicated to individual accounts.

"We've developed a great relationship with our ExaGrid support engineer. He understands our environment and he's always available to answer any question we have," said Winckler. "The ExaGrid system is easy to manage and the user interface has a nice look and feel. Installing the ExaGrid system has made a huge impact here. Before we installed the system, I would spend as many as 15 hours per week on backups but now I only spend about an hour a week. It's been extremely liberating."

ExaGrid and CommVault Galaxy

CommVault Galaxy Backup and Recovery software contains extensive capabilities to simplify the management of backup media resources. Galaxy software writes backup data to a broad collection of storage devices, including disk as a media target. This ability to write to magnetic disk as a functional equal of all other media types while exploiting the random access nature of the disk media sets Galaxy software apart.

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

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