InvestorPlace Media Researches Backup Alternatives, Chooses ExaGrid to Reduce Backup Times and Reliance on Tape
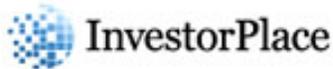
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>
> **Mark Maroclo**
> **Manager of Information Technology**
> **InvestorPlace Media, LLC**

Customer Overview

InvestorPlace Media, LLC was founded 37 years ago as an investment newsletter publisher for self-directed individual investors. The company's goal was to connect world-class investment advice with investors who wanted great leadership and direction. Today, InvestorPlace Media provides investment advice from over 15 industry leaders and more than 35 services. InvestorPlace Media is privately owned by Avista Capital Partners, and is headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C.

Long Backup Times, Costly Tape

The IT department at InvestorPlace Media is responsible for managing 75 servers and a total of 11.5 TB of data. The staff had been backing up the information to tape but long backup times, time consuming restore processes, and the cost and logistics of purchasing and managing tape finally grew to be too much and the company decided to look for a new solution.

"Our full backups were taking four and a half days to complete, and that was way too long. However, the bigger issue was that we were using 12 to 15 tapes each time and we simply couldn't sustain it. We were spending a fortune to purchase, transport and store all that tape and it took a lot of man hours to administer and manage it all," said Mark Maroclo, manager of information technology at InvestorPlace Media. "We needed a more state-of the-art solution that would reduce our reliance on tape and improve our backup and restore speeds."

Cost-effective ExaGrid System Delivers Scalability and Flexibility to add a Second Site

InvestorPlace Media initially looked at solutions from ExaGrid and EMC Data Domain, as well as an HP MSA disk-to-disk backup system and straight storage solutions from Dell and EMC.

Maroclo said that the company quickly ruled out the HP, Dell and EMC storage solutions due to cost and lack of functionality. The company eventually chose the ExaGrid system over the EMC Data Domain solution because the staff found that the ExaGrid system was more cost effective and offered a greater level of scalability.

"The Data Domain system was extremely expensive and it wasn't nearly as scalable as the ExaGrid. The ExaGrid system is modular, so all the systems come with their own processing units and storage processors. The intelligence is already built in, so we could start off with one system and then add other units as needed. With the Data Domain system, once you purchase a Data Domain head, all you can do is add disks to it," he said. "We also liked that we could cost-effectively add a second ExaGrid unit offsite for data replication and completely eliminate tape. Replication was extremely expensive with the other solutions. Overall, the ExaGrid was far more flexible and cost effective than the competition."

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 100TB 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.

Data Deduplication Technology Reduces Amount of Data Stored

Maroclo said that ExaGrid's data deduplication technology helps to reduce the amount of data that InvestorPlace Media

EXAGRID™

stores, which helps maximize retention and also enabled the company to purchase a smaller system.

"Once the ExaGrid was installed, the data deduplication went to work immediately. We've seen good dedupe ratios, especially since we have a lot of unstructured data that we back up and store. The data deduplication works automatically and we don't have to touch it. It also helped lower our initial investment because we could purchase a smaller system than we otherwise would have," he said.

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. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's byte-level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Backup Times Reduced from 4.5 Days to 6 Hours, Significantly Faster Restores

Maroclo said that since installing the ExaGrid system, backup times have been reduced from over 4.5 days with tape to six hours with the ExaGrid.

"We're thrilled with the improvement in our backup times. The other area where the ExaGrid has made a big impact in is with restores. We had an issue recently where an entire data warehouse was corrupted and we were able to restore all the data in a little over two hours. It would have been a nightmare with tape. Even simply finding the right tapes and transporting them back would have taken days," said he said. "We're often able to complete restores for our users even before we're able to complete a service ticket. With the ExaGrid, we don't have to worry about our data or our ability to restore it if need be."

Flexibility to Choose Any Backup Application

Maroclo said that when the InvestorPlace Media evaluated its backup environment, the company also decided to switch its backup application to Symantec's Backup Exec. The ExaGrid system works with all leading backup applications, so customers can choose the solution that is right for their environment.

"One of the big plusses of working with ExaGrid is that their team is agnostic in terms of backup software. In fact, they have subject matter experts versed in all the major backup applications. Many of the other vendors we talked with either

required us to choose their own backup applications or tried to convince us to go with certain solutions. ExaGrid enabled us to choose the right application for our environment and they help support it, too," said Maroclo.

Outstanding Customer Support

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

"It took us only twenty minutes to get the ExaGrid out of the box, into the rack and configured. We were amazed that it was so simple," said Maroclo. "We've also been extremely pleased with ExaGrid's customer support team. Some of our other vendors will take days or even weeks to call back regarding a problem. We have a dedicated ExaGrid engineer who knows us by name and who knows our environment. He's easy to reach, and he has a lot of expertise in both the ExaGrid system, our backup software, and in backup processes."

Management and Administration Time Reduced From 30 Hours per Week with Tape to 20 Minutes with ExaGrid

Maroclo said that since installing the ExaGrid system, he and his team have been able to dramatically reduce the amount of time they spend managing and administering backups.

"We have a dedicated engineer who used to spend at least thirty hours per week just managing tape. Now, he spends only twenty minutes every Monday morning checking the ExaGrid system to make sure that things are running smoothly. It's been a huge time saver for us," he said. "The ExaGrid has made our backups and restores more efficient and has reduced our reliance on tape. It's a great product."

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.

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