



School District Installs ExaGrid, Easily Scales System to Accommodate Data Growth



USA

Key Benefits:

- ExaGrid has a reasonable price point and maintenance costs unlike proprietary systems
- The system works seamlessly with Veritas NetBackup
- Less time is spent managing backup jobs
- Automated offsite replication provides DR protection
- Backup windows have been cut by more than half

“When we purchased the ExaGrid system, scalability was definitely a requirement for us. We’ve already grown our ExaGrid to handle more data, and the process of adding another unit couldn’t have been easier. The system is easy to use and it works beautifully – and with its flexible growth path, we feel that it will serve us well for years to come.”

Doug Small
Storage Engineer

Customer Overview

Jeffco Public Schools (Jeffco) is located in Jefferson County, Colorado. It is the second largest school district in Colorado serving 69,000 students across 155 schools. With 14,000 employees, the district is the largest employer in Jefferson County and has provided educational excellence for more than 70 years.

ExaGrid System Reduces Costs, Improves Disaster Recovery

Jeffco Public Schools had been backing up its data to a four-year-old IBM backup solution but when its maintenance agreement ended, the district’s IT staff weighed ongoing costs and future backup requirements and decided to look for a new solution.

“Our old solution involved writing data to an IBM disk array and then copying it off to a tape library. Once a week, we would pull tapes and send them to our disaster recovery site. It worked well on a day-to-day basis, but we were concerned about the time it would take for us to recover from a disaster,” said Doug Small, storage engineer for the Jeffco Public Schools. “Financially, it didn’t make sense for us to continue the maintenance contract, especially in light of the fact that the solution wasn’t meeting all of our needs.”

After looking at several different solutions, the school district purchased a two-site ExaGrid system and installed one unit in its main datacenter and the second offsite for disaster recovery.

“The ExaGrid system is built on commodity hardware with ingenious software that meets our needs. Its price point and maintenance costs were far more reasonable than the proprietary systems we looked at, and we liked that we could continue using Veritas NetBackup as our primary backup application,” said Small.

Small said that the school district saves money with the ExaGrid system, and its ability to recover from a disaster is far better as well.

“We’re saving a considerable amount of money because we don’t have to continuously purchase media, and we don’t have the maintenance costs associated with trying to keep a tape library up and running. In terms of manpower, we’re spending far less time managing backup jobs and handling tape,” he said. “With the two-site ExaGrid system, we are more confident in our ability to recover from a disaster because our data is automatically replicated offsite each and every night.”



Full Backup Times Reduced by 36 Hours

Jeffco Public Schools has experienced shorter backup times since installing the ExaGrid system. Full backups using its old solution used to start on Friday night at 5:00 p.m. and run until Monday at noon. Now, backups still start at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, but run only until midnight Saturday.

“With our old system, some of our systems were slow on Monday mornings because backups were still running, but that’s not an issue now,” said Small. “Restores are faster, too. I don’t do a lot of restores, but when I do, I’m shocked at how fast they are. Most of the time, they take less than a second. I’ve been doing backups as part of my job for years and it’s such a change from tape, where it can take so much time and effort to perform a simple restore.”

Powerful Data Deduplication Reduces Stored Data to Maximize Disk Space

Small said that Jeffco’s old solution incorporated data deduplication technology, but it wasn’t effective. However, ExaGrid’s data deduplication technology has significantly improved retention while ensuring fast backups.

“The ExaGrid system does a terrific job at reducing our data without slowing down the backup performance,” said Small.

ExaGrid writes backups directly to a disk-cache Landing Zone, avoiding inline processing and ensuring the highest possible backup performance, which results in the shortest backup window. Adaptive Deduplication performs deduplication and replication in parallel with backups for a strong recovery point (RPO). As data is being deduplicated to the repository, it can also be replicated to a second ExaGrid site or the public cloud for disaster recovery (DR).



Easy Setup, Less Time Spent Managing Backups

“The ExaGrid system was easy to install, and it doesn’t take much effort to manage it. The system doesn’t need a lot of handholding; all we have to do is create shares and allocate space for the different locations we’re backing up. We monitor our backup jobs, but it really doesn’t take a lot of our time,” Small said.

The ExaGrid system was designed to be easy to set up and operate. ExaGrid’s industry-leading level 2 senior support engineers are assigned to individual customers, ensuring they always work with the same engineer. Customer’s never have to repeat themselves to various support staff, and issues get resolved quickly.

“I spend less time managing backups now because I don’t have to deal with tape, and because our backup jobs don’t fail, I don’t have to spend time troubleshooting. Our backups run better and faster than with tape and without any real intervention from me or any other staff member,” said Small.

Small said that the ExaGrid customer support engineer assigned to Jeffco’s account helps to ensure that backups run flawlessly.

“The support we get from ExaGrid is fantastic. It’s almost a concierge sort of experience, and we don’t get that from many vendors. Our support engineer really knows his way around the system and has been available any time we’ve called about a question or issue,” he said.

Scalability to Grow

Jeffco has taken advantage of ExaGrid’s scale-out architecture to expand the capacity of its disaster recovery site.

ExaGrid’s award-winning scale-out architecture provides customers with a fixed-length backup window regardless of data growth. Its unique disk-cache Landing Zone allows for the fastest backups and retains the most recent backup in its full unduplicated form, enabling the fastest restores.

ExaGrid’s appliance models can be mixed and matched into a single scale-out system allowing a full backup of up to 2.7PB with a combined ingest rate of 488TB/hr, in a single system. The appliances automatically join the scale-out system. Each appliance includes the appropriate amount of processor, memory, disk, and bandwidth for the data size. By adding compute with capacity, the backup window remains fixed in length as the data grows. Automatic load balancing across all repositories allows for full utilization of all appliances. Data is deduplicated into an offline repository, and additionally, data is globally deduplicated across all repositories.

This combination of capabilities in a turnkey appliance makes the ExaGrid system easy to install, manage, and scale. ExaGrid’s architecture provides lifetime value and investment protection that no other architecture can match.

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ExaGrid and NetBackup

Veritas NetBackup delivers high-performance data protection that scales to protect the largest enterprise environments. ExaGrid is integrated with and certified by Veritas in 9 areas, including Accelerator, AIR, single disk pool, analytics, and other areas to ensure full support of NetBackup. ExaGrid Tiered Backup Storage offers the fastest backups, the fastest restores, and the only true scale-out solution as data grows to provide a fixed-length backup window and a non-network-facing tier (tiered air gap) for recovery from a ransomware event.

About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides Tiered Backup Storage with a unique disk-cache Landing Zone that enables fastest backups and restores, a Repository Tier that offers the lowest cost for long-term retention and enables ransomware recovery, and scale-out architecture which includes full appliances with up to 2.7PB full backup in a single system.

Learn more at www.exagrid.com.