

Keene State College Chooses ExaGrid as Cornerstone of Backup Strategy

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



Keene
STATE COLLEGE

"We were spending lots of time and money on our old backup solution to try to make it work, but it just didn't have the enterprise functionality we needed. With ExaGrid, we don't have to worry about backups anymore, so we can spend our time on value-added projects that can really move the institution forward."

Michelle Wood
Director of IT
Keene State College

Customer Overview

As the public liberal arts college of New Hampshire, Keene State College offers an enriching campus community. Keene State achieves academic excellence through the integration of teaching, learning, scholarship, and service. Founded in 1909 and located in the Monadnock Region, the College is part of the University of New Hampshire state system and currently has over 5,700 total enrolled students.

Need to Shorten Backup Times and Improve Reliability Led to ExaGrid

Keene State College needed to shorten its backup times and improve backup reliability, so the IT staff decided to look for a new backup solution.

"We had been backing up to a combination of direct attached storage and tape, but our large file servers and databases were taking a week or more to finish, and our backup jobs often failed. We were also concerned about the reliability of our older tapes," said Kevin Forrest, system administrator at Keene State College. "We didn't want to wait for something bad to happen, so we decided to be proactive and overhaul our backup system to incorporate an enterprise-class solution."

After looking at various backup devices on the market, Keene State College chose ExaGrid's disk-based backup solution with data deduplication. The ExaGrid system works along with the College's existing backup solution, Symantec Backup Exec, to back up a wide range of data including the College's main file server, Exchange databases, and its VMware environment.

"The ExaGrid system delivered the performance and data deduplication we were looking for at a good price point," said Michelle Wood, director of IT at Keene State College. "We also liked that we could easily add more capacity or a second unit offsite for disaster recovery at some point in the

future. One of our sister colleges here in New Hampshire is also an ExaGrid customer, and they gave the system high marks. That sealed the deal for us."

According to Wood, another advantage of the ExaGrid system was its tight integration with Backup Exec and other leading backup applications.

"The ExaGrid system works beautifully with Backup Exec," said Wood. "However, as we expand our footprint in the virtualization area, we're leaving open the possibility of changing backup solutions. Because the ExaGrid system works with all the popular backup applications, we can easily change solutions if we think it might be advantageous."

Reduced Backup Times, Management and Administration

Since installing the ExaGrid system, the College has been able to reduce backup times significantly.

"A full backup on one of our file servers had been taking seven days to complete. Now, a backup of that same file server takes only about 12 hours. Also, our incremental backup times have been reduced from 20 hours to just an hour," Forrest said. "We sleep a little better at night knowing that our data will be completely backed up by the time we arrive at work in the morning, and we feel more confident in our ability to restore data when needed," he said.



EXAGRID™

Data Deduplication Ratios as High as 25:1 Help to Reduce Amount of Data Stored

“ExaGrid’s data deduplication technology performs extremely well,” said Wood. “Most organizations back up redundant data and we were no exception. Currently, our dedupe rates are running as high as 25:1, which really helps to maximize disk space.”

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 zone-level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Easy Setup and Management, Industry-Leading Customer Support

“Setting up the ExaGrid system was incredibly easy,” commented Forrest. “The box arrived, we unpacked the appliance and racked it, and phoned into ExaGrid’s customer support. We spent about 20 minutes on the phone together going over the system, and then we started backing up files. It was great,” he said. “The system itself is rock-solid. We haven’t had to call into support that often but when we have, the response has been immediate. Our support engineer is always available and is experienced enough to answer any question we have.”

Management and administration time has been reduced as well, said Wood. With the College’s old backup infrastructure, the IT department used to spend up to 20 hours per week on backups; now staff members spend only about 45 minutes.

“Installing the ExaGrid system has really helped us from a planning perspective because we don’t have to worry about our backups or spend unexpected time troubleshooting when things go wrong. It enables us to focus on other parts of our jobs,” said Wood. “Restores are also very fast and reliable because most of the time, the information is sitting on the landing zone. All the information is right there for me, and I don’t have to sift through tapes anymore.”

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 dedicated to individual accounts. The system is fully

supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

Flexibility to Add Capacity

“Putting the ExaGrid system in place let us build a solid foundation for our backup infrastructure, and its scalability will enable us to easily add capacity in the future,” said Forrest. “In the future, we can also add a second system for disaster recovery to further reduce our reliance on tape.”

Wood said that using the ExaGrid system for backups enables her IT staff to focus on more productive projects. “We were spending lots of time and money on our old backup solution to try to make it work, but it just didn’t have the enterprise functionality we needed,” she said. “With ExaGrid, we don’t have to worry about backups anymore, so we can spend our time on value-added projects that can really move the institution forward.”

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 130TB 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.

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.

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