

Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative Gets Smart about Disk-Based Backups and Deduplication with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Jake LaMountain
Systems Administrator
Lower Pioneer Valley
Educational Collaborative

Customer Overview

The Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC), organized in 1974, is a group of seven school districts in western Massachusetts. The LPVEC is the second largest of the Massachusetts educational collaboratives, and it conducts a greater variety of education-related programs and services than do other collaboratives. While the foundation of the LPVEC remains the special education and vocational/technical education programs, the collaborative is dedicated to assisting its member school districts in the development and operation of both efficient and cost-effective education-related services.

Unreliable, Time-Consuming Tape Backups Take Toll on Small IT Department

Jake LaMountain runs a one-man IT shop at the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC), so it's critical that he makes the most of his time and resources each and every day. LaMountain had been backing up the LPVEC's data to several different tape systems but found tape to be unreliable and the backup process time consuming. He began exploring different approaches to backup and even considered building his own solution, but then he learned about the ExaGrid system.

"I was spending a lot of time managing and administering backups every day, and we could only keep a week of retention. I felt that there had to be a better approach than tape and began trying to come up with my own solution when I learned about ExaGrid," said LaMountain, systems administrator at LPVEC. "The ExaGrid system was everything I wanted in a backup solution and more."

ExaGrid System Works with Existing Backup Software to Streamline Backups

The LPVEC chose an ExaGrid system with data deduplication to work alongside its existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec, to accommodate its finance and administrative data. In addition, the LPVEC plans to install a second ExaGrid system to back up records from its vocational school.

"The first thing that attracted me to the ExaGrid system was its data deduplication technology. It works efficiently behind the scenes and is very effective at maximizing disk space," said LaMountain. "We've been experiencing data deduplication rates as high as 80:1 thanks to ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication technology."

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.

"I like the fact that I have instant access to a full backup in case I need it. Our users don't always notice that a file is missing until they go to access it and at that point, the data could be weeks old. With the ExaGrid, I can easily restore files that were last backed up weeks or even months ago," said LaMountain. "The other thing I like about it is that I can remote in to the system when I'm off-site to check on things or to perform a restore. It gives me a level of freedom and flexibility that I didn't have before."

EXAGRID™

Backup Times, Management and Administration Significantly Reduced

Since installing the ExaGrid system, LaMountain said that backup times have been reduced from four hours to less than an hour. In addition, he now saves 30 minutes per day on management and administrative tasks.

"I used to spend at least a half hour a day checking tapes, and that's a lot of time when you work by yourself. The ExaGrid has enabled me to gain that time back so that I can focus on other things," said LaMountain. "The ExaGrid system is also a lot more reliable than tape, and I have a high level of confidence that our backups are completed correctly each and every night. It really is automatic."

Fast Setup, Superior Customer Support

LaMountain said that the ExaGrid works well within the LPVEC's network, and setting up the ExaGrid system was simple and trouble-free.

"The ExaGrid system integrated well with our existing infrastructure, and especially with Backup Exec," said LaMountain. "The ExaGrid was very easy to install. When I first unpacked the unit, I saw a notice that asked me to call ExaGrid's customer support before turning it on. I was worried that it would be more complex than I thought, but as it turned out, the ExaGrid folks were just there to walk me through the process, and they were able to answer any questions I had. ExaGrid's support staff is wonderful. They're very responsive and knowledgeable, and I have a high level of confidence in them."

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. As the LPVEC's data grows, the ExaGrid can be expanded to meet additional backup demands.

About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

Customers worldwide depend on ExaGrid Systems to solve their backup problems—effectively and permanently. ExaGrid's disk-based, scale-out GRID architecture adjusts to increasing backup demands due to constantly growing data volumes. It is the only solution that combines compute with capacity as well as a unique landing zone to permanently shorten backup windows and eliminate expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at www.exagrid.com.

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.

"The ExaGrid system is very flexible and it has really cut down my stress level. With tape, I used to come in every morning and hope that that my backups were completed correctly. The ExaGrid is a solid system and it works consistently each and every night. We run a very lean operation here and it's a tremendous relief to not have to worry about backups anymore," he said.

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."

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid is the leader in cost-effective disk-based backup solutions. A highly scalable system that works with existing backup applications, the ExaGrid system is ideal for companies looking to quickly eliminate the hassles of tape backup while reducing their existing backup windows. ExaGrid's innovative approach minimizes the amount of data to be stored by providing standard data compression for the most recent backups along with byte-level data deduplication technology for all previous backups. Customers can deploy ExaGrid at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories or for disaster recovery.

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