

Leavitt Group Replaces Unreliable NAS, Stabilizes Backups by Pairing Veeam with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Derrick Rose
IT Operations Engineer

Customer Overview

Founded in 1952, Leavitt Group has grown into the tenth-largest independently held insurance brokerage in the United States. The Utah-based company prides itself on its expertise and ability to help its clients succeed. Leavitt Group's team of insurance professionals consists of individuals with a wide range of expertise, many of whom are considered regional and national leaders in their respective fields.

ExaGrid Chosen to Replace Unreliable NAS Device

Leavitt Group backs up data for its many affiliate partners at a single data center. The company has had a completely virtualized environment for many years, and had used Veeam to manage VMware backups to QNAP NAS and direct-attached storage.

Derrick Rose, IT operations engineer, had experienced many issues with the QNAP NAS device and wanted to look into a new solution that would also work with Veeam. "There were issues with that QNAP NAS since day one. Drives on the device would fail, at one point as many as 19 out of 24, but I was able to manually recover them. We needed to store a huge amount of data on the 200TB NAS device and we were filling it up quickly. It just couldn't handle all the virtual machines (VMs) that were backing up to it.

"QNAP technicians advised dumbing the backups down to 25 VMs at a time, but we have about 800 VMs that need to be backed up in a ten-hour window, so that would not have worked. Every time I tried to back up all of our data, it would lock up and then not respond. That was the deal breaker."

Rose looked into other storage solutions, including Cisco and Dell EMC Data Domain. He contacted his Veeam representative, who highly recommended ExaGrid for its exceptional integration with Veeam. Rose researched ExaGrid and was impressed by its evergreen approach, which eliminates product obsolescence. He was also interested in data deduplication, as he had experienced capacity issues with the QNAP NAS solution.



Reliable Backups Stay Within Window

Rose installed an ExaGrid system at Leavitt Group's data center. Over the course of a year, Rose backs up almost a petabyte of data, regularly backing up 220TB of raw data. Each of Leavitt Group's many affiliates has its own SQL box and file server as well as insurance applications to back up, and Rose manages those in a Citrix environment.

Rose runs a full backup to the ExaGrid system each night as well as a weekly full that is copied and replicated offsite. He also creates a Shadow Copy of the file servers every two hours, with a nightly snapshot of the whole VM. Nightly backups are staggered, and now the 800 VMs are completely backed up within seven hours, which is a major improvement from the ten-hour window that Rose struggled to maintain with the QNAP NAS device. "We try to leave VMware, the ESXI hosts alone as much as possible, especially during the day when it's being used. It's awesome to be able to utilize the ExaGrid

Key Benefits:

- Deduplication and scalability allow for increased retention
- 30% reduction of nightly backup window
- ExaGrid-Veeam integration cuts Linux NFS as a middleman between app and storage
- No product obsolescence
- Reliability eliminates need to 'babysit' backups

to run our replications and backup copy jobs from the main backup file off the ExaGrid. The ExaGrid is on a dual 40G Ethernet connection, and at our DR site we have a 1G fiber connection between the DR site and the data center, so replications run pretty quickly.”

Rose appreciates the reliability of his ExaGrid system. “The peace of mind I have gained from using ExaGrid is so nice. I don’t have to babysit it; I don’t have to check on it every hour of the day. It actually works as advertised, and it’s very stable. I would highly recommend ExaGrid to anyone looking for a backup storage solution. It is definitely the right choice. The pricing on the system can’t be beat, and the fact that there is no end-of-life is incredible.”

ExaGrid writes backups directly to a disk 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 while providing full system resources to the backups for the shortest backup window. Available system cycles are utilized to perform deduplication and offsite replication for an optimal recovery point at the disaster recovery site. Once complete, the onsite data is protected and immediately available in its full unduplicated form for fast restores, VM Instant Recoveries, and tape copies while the offsite data is ready for disaster recovery.

‘Impressive’ Deduplication and Scalability Key to Increasing Retention

Leavitt Group had been keeping retention of one year, but plans to increase that to three years now that the ExaGrid system is in place, due to deduplication maximizing storage capacity and the system’s scalability. “We eventually want to keep up to three years’ retention. Our current ExaGrid was set up for one year, and now we plan to expand the system as needed. So far, we have about 11 months of backups, and everything is working really well. We’ve been able to restore data many times, and we haven’t had any issues. Everything is going as planned as far as our RTO,” said Rose.

All of ExaGrid’s appliances contain not just disk but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. When the system

needs to expand, additional appliances are simply attached to the existing system. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows, with customers paying for what they need when they need it. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliances are added to the existing system, ExaGrid automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the system.

Prior to using ExaGrid, Leavitt Group had not been deduping its data, which caused capacity issues with the previous solution. With ExaGrid, Leavitt Group is able to achieve an average dedupe ratio of 8:1. “The deduplication is awesome. Our ExaGrid system is able to store nearly 1PB of data that we accumulate in a year using just 230TB of storage, which is impressive,” said Rose.

ExaGrid and Veeam

Rose has found that ExaGrid integrates well with Veeam, especially in comparison to his last solution. “It’s so much easier to set up, especially since ExaGrid has the Veeam protocol. It’s all built into Veeam now. With the QNAP NAS device, I had to set up a few Linux servers to actually mount the QNAP as a share, and then I had to use the Linux NFS feature in Veeam to connect to the Linux box that way—so everything was going through NFS, and the QNAP just couldn’t handle it. It was quite a process to deal with a middleman between the NAS and Veeam, which was cut out when we switched to ExaGrid. Now, it’s a much simpler solution to set up.”

The combination of ExaGrid’s and Veeam’s industry-leading virtual server data protection solutions allows customers to utilize Veeam Backup & Replication in VMware, vSphere, and Microsoft Hyper-V virtual environments on ExaGrid’s disk-based backup system. This combination provides fast backups and efficient data storage as well as replication to an offsite location for disaster recovery. The ExaGrid system fully leverages Veeam Backup & Replication’s built-in backup-to-disk capabilities and ExaGrid’s zone-level data deduplication for additional data reduction (and cost reduction) over standard disk solutions. Customers can use Veeam Backup & Replication’s built-in source-side deduplication in concert with ExaGrid’s disk-based backup system with zone-level deduplication to further shrink backups.

About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides hyper-converged secondary storage (HCSS) for backup with a unique landing zone and scale-out architecture. The landing zone enables the fastest backups, restores, and instant VM recoveries. The scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable system and ensures a fixed-length backup window as data grows, eliminating expensive and disruptive forklift upgrades. Learn more at www.exagrid.com.

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