



Milton CAT Refreshes Infrastructure, Replaces Dell EMC Avamar with ExaGrid and Veeam

Milton CAT



USA

Key Benefits:

- Milton CAT pleased with ExaGrid's purchasing process, its "sharp" calculations for environment sizing, future data growth, and data deduplication
- Dell EMC end-of-life'd Milton CAT's Avamar product and support; ExaGrid doesn't end-of-life products and supports all models regardless of age
- ExaGrid's "solid target device" meets Milton CAT's SLAs
- Proactive ExaGrid support assisted with installation and configuration; followed up to ensure Milton CAT was "fully satisfied"
- ExaGrid-Veeam has reduced restore of 100GB server from 1 hour to 15 minutes

"Most Information Technology teams who are managing backups at a mid-sized company have a lot of other things to worry about as well, like managing an infrastructure, delivering applications to end users and driving the company forward with technology. What we really wanted was a solid target device to back up data to, and a system that allowed us to 'set it and forget it,' and ExaGrid is just that."

Scott Weber

Technical Services Manager

Customer Overview

From its start in a dirt floor garage in Concord, New Hampshire, Milton CAT has grown to 13 locations, spanning a six state territory; it has over 1,000 employees, many with twenty, thirty or even forty years of service at the company and it's widely recognized by Caterpillar as being one of its top performing dealerships worldwide. Milton CAT still runs on the same philosophy that made the company successful in its early years. The company's growth and reputation have been a result of experience, continuity of purpose, empowering employees, and a longstanding partnership with Caterpillar.

High Maintenance Costs Drive Search for New Solution

Milton CAT had been backing up its data to Dell EMC Avamar, which is both a hardware and software-based solution. While the IT staff was satisfied with the backups themselves, the growing cost of maintenance and Avamar's shift to become software-based proved it to be less of a fit for Milton CAT.

"Avamar worked fine; we didn't really have an issue with it, but the cost of maintenance on it was high," said Scott Weber, Milton CAT's Technical Services Manager. "We were also in the process of an entire infrastructure refresh, and had made the decision to purchase all new equipment for all our servers. We bought new backend storage and in the case of backups, Avamar had become something that we didn't want to deal with anymore."

"From a maintenance standpoint, the cost had become too high and the Avamar product we were using was actually phased out by Dell EMC. They are moving toward a software-based solution and selling smaller devices now, so they were ending support of the model that we were running. These were really big pieces of hardware, and it just didn't make sense for us financially to keep the Avamar solution running," said Weber.

Milton CAT was working with a value-added reseller (VAR) partner to find a new solution and looked briefly at Dell EMC again, as well as Veritas and Commvault. Weber had always been interested in trying Veeam, and their VAR recommended using the backup application to manage Milton CAT's backups.

"Once we took a look at Veeam, we realized that we would need a target device to back up to. The VAR recommended ExaGrid, as did some colleagues in the IT field. After doing some research, Milton CAT was impressed with what Gartner had reported about both ExaGrid and Veeam, so we decided to purchase the products as a combined solution."



According to Weber, when their VAR brought the ExaGrid sales team in, they were very sharp with their calculations, and they explained how the deduplication technology works. "The presentation was solid and very easy to understand. ExaGrid put a lot into the sizing of our environment, taking into account our future growth and helping to estimate what our deduplication ratios would be, and then recommending which model to buy. We felt very comfortable with the purchasing process."

Installation Amid Infrastructure Refresh

ExaGrid was installed in the midst of an entire infrastructure refresh, a hectic time for Milton CAT's IT staff. "We had a lot of things going on at the time that ExaGrid and Veeam were installed. We were standing up new infrastructure, new Cisco blades and a Nimble back-end storage device, and we had decided that we were going to upgrade our VMware as well. We did a rack-and-stack of all this new equipment and it was running side-by-side with our older infrastructure, which was mostly Dell EMC. There was a lot of heavy lifting and a lot of work done between our staff, our VAR, and a number of different vendors," said Weber.

"I was impressed that early on in the process that ExaGrid reached out to us to let us know that they would be on a call with our VAR to assist with installation in any way they could. Not only did ExaGrid execute that, but I received follow-up emails from the ExaGrid support engineer and the ExaGrid sales team making sure that I was fully satisfied with the product. Our assigned support engineer worked with our staff and the VAR on installing the ExaGrid system at our DR site as well, and made sure that the equipment was running and configured at both sites," he said.

Backing Up and Restoring Critical Data Quickly and Easily

Milton CAT uses Microsoft Dynamics AX for its ERP business system, which handles everything from the company's invoicing to inventory management and warehousing. "Everything that we really need is built into the Microsoft Dynamics AX platform, and the entire ERP infrastructure here is approximately 40 servers.

The back end of the ERP system is made up of SQL servers, and there are a lot of other peripheral servers connected to the solution for business intelligence and interface communications and EDI. Aside from the Dynamics system, we also back up a few other business-critical applications and Microsoft data, as well as our Voice over IP (VoIP) Cisco telephony system. In the case of the phone system, it's nice to be able to take snapshot backups of the machines. They happen to be UNIX/Linux machines, and we can back those up with Veeam and send them right off to ExaGrid, which is great," said Weber.

"Backups are crucial because they ensure that we can retrieve business-critical data for the company. Most Information Technology teams who are managing backups at a mid-sized company have a lot of other things to worry about as well, like managing an infrastructure, delivering applications to end users, and driving the company forward with technology. What we really wanted was a solid target device to back up data to, and a system that allowed us to 'set it and forget it,' and ExaGrid is just that. We needed a solid platform that would meet our SLAs, and our backups have worked great using ExaGrid and Veeam.

"We've done some testing to restore full machines, and that process went much faster than it had with Avamar. We can restore a 100GB virtual server in under 15 minutes, which certainly meets our SLA; Avamar took closer to an hour. So we're definitely happy with how quickly can restore data from our new solution," said Weber.

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).

ExaGrid and Veeam

Veeam's backup solutions and ExaGrid's Tiered Backup Storage combine for the industry's fastest backups, fastest restores, a scale-out storage system as data grows, and a strong ransomware recovery story – all at the lowest cost.

ExaGrid-Veeam Combined Dedupe

Veeam uses changed block tracking to perform a level of data deduplication. ExaGrid allows Veeam deduplication and Veeam dedupe-friendly compression to stay on. ExaGrid will increase Veeam's deduplication by a factor of about 7:1 to a total combined deduplication ratio of 14:1, reducing the storage required and saving on storage costs up front and over time.



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.