Mokena School District 159 Prepares for Data Growth, Chooses ExaGrid's Purpose-Built Appliance for Backup and Data Dedupe

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

"Some of the software products claimed superior flexibility, but after doing some research, it became apparent that we'd still need a hardware platform capable of handling the load now and into the future. We liked the quality of ExaGrid's hardware platform, and it was designed to be a backup appliance that could easily scale up in the future."

Steve Hastings
Director of Technology
Mokena School District 159

Customer Overview

The Mokena School District 159 serves 1,700 students in grades K-8 in the village of Mokena in Will County, Illinois.

Need to Replace Tape Library and Prepare for Data Growth Led to Evaluation of Backup Alternatives

The IT department at the Mokena School District 159 began looking for a new backup solution to replace its aging tape library because the staff was concerned about the longevity of the unit and its ability to meet future backup needs.

"Tape drives don't last forever and we were concerned about our ability to back up our growing amounts of data," said Steve Hastings, director of technology for the Mokena School District 159. "We were considering several new technologies like virtualization that would significantly grow the amount of data we generate, and we realized that we needed a more flexible, robust solution with the ability to scale up."

Flexible ExaGrid System Delivers Functionality, Superior Platform

After looking at both hardware and software-based solutions, the school district chose an ExaGrid diskbased backup system with data deduplication.

"We looked at lots of different products and decided that an appliance would be the best choice for us. Some of the software products claimed superior flexibility, but after doing some research, it became apparent that we'd still need a hardware platform capable of handling the load now and into the future," said Hastings. "We liked the quality of ExaGrid's hardware platform, and it was designed to be a backup appliance that could easily scale up in the future. We also were impressed with its functionality and ease of use."

The school district was able to keep its existing investment in its backup application, Symantec Backup Exec, which works along with the ExaGrid system to back up all of the district's data.

"The ability to redeploy Backup Exec for use with the ExaGrid system enabled us to keep the costs down on the initial purchase and made the transition easier," Hastings said. "We had been working with Backup Exec for five years, so it was nice that we didn't have to learn a new backup application."

Data Deduplication Maximizes Amount of Data Stored

Hastings said that ExaGrid's data deduplication technology helps reduce and manage the district's data. Currently, the school district is seeing deduplication ratios as high as 18:1.

"The amount of data we back up fluctuates, and by nature it increases towards the end of the school year," he said. "With tape, we were limited in our ability to purge old data because we needed to keep the physical tapes in storage. The ExaGrid system enables us to effectively manage our stored data, and its data deduplication technology does a fantastic job at reducing it."

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

EXAGRID

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 postprocess 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.

12- to 14-Hour Backup Jobs Reduced to 5 Hours, Faster Restores Ease Burden on IT Staff

Since installing the ExaGrid system, backup jobs run more efficiently. The district used to allow 12 to 14 hours for backups to complete, but now they run in approximately five hours. Hastings said that restoring data is faster as well.

"One of the things that has impressed me the most about the ExaGrid system is the restore speed. I was used to restoring data from tape and going through the whole process of finding the right tape, loading it, locating the file, and then restoring the data. All in all, it took about 20 minutes. Restoring data off the ExaGrid takes just a couple of minutes," he said.

Easy Setup and Superior Customer Support

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.

"Installing the ExaGrid system was painless, and it's been a fairly hands-off solution ever since. Dealing with tape was such a hassle, but backing up to the ExaGrid is so easy. I don't really have to worry about anything. I just check my email every day to look at the alert messages I receive to confirm that the backup jobs ran successfully," said Hastings.

ExaGrid's customer support engineers help keep the system running by being proactive, he said.

"Dealing with ExaGrid's customer support staff has probably been one of the best experiences I've had to date with any company. It's been unique in that I've never had a company contact me after installation to check in on a regular basis," said Hastings. "As an organization, it's clear that ExaGrid values customer support. Our engineer knows his way around the system and is proactive."

GRID Architecture Ensures Scalability

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.

"It's comforting to know that we now have a backup solution in place that can easily grow with us as our backup requirements increase," said Hastings. "As with any school district, our budget is tight. However, investing in a technology that can be upgraded quickly and cost-effectively is a good choice now and for the future."

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.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality SATA drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology stores only the changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk needed by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 or more, resulting in a solution that is 25 to 30% the cost of standard SATA drives.

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

ExaGrid Systems, Inc. | 2000 West Park Drive | Westborough, MA 01581 | 800.868.6985 | www.exagrid.com