

NSM Insurance Stores 58TB of Data in 1.4TB of Disk Using ExaGrid and Veeam

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Todd George
Technology Manager
NSM Insurance Group

Key Benefits:

- Move from tape to ExaGrid and Veeam provides eight months of retention
- Backup window reduced from entire weekend to 17 hours
- 'Robust' ExaGrid platform easily handles large-volume data stored on a fraction of the disk space
- Deduplication as high as 41:1 for SQL data

Customer Overview

NSM Insurance Group is a national leader in the development, marketing, and underwriting of industry-specific insurance programs, as well as an industry leader in the wholesale brokerage arena. Over the years, NSM Insurance Group has grown to more than \$400M in annual premium; NSM Insurance Group's size and national scope have helped the firm to establish and maintain strong partnerships with a wide range of the industry's top-rated carriers. Its market clout provides strong financial backing, comprehensive coverages, and greater market potential to meet each client's unique needs.

Move to Virtualization Led to Data Growth, Backup Woes

NSM Insurance Group had been backing up to tape, but rapid business growth and a move to virtualization translated into an explosive increase in data, and as a result, a search for a new, more reliable backup method. The firm's IT staff started by looking for a new backup application designed for virtualized environments and selected Veeam® along with an Aberdeen NAS device and a removeable disk-based off-site backup solution from Highly Reliable Systems. However, staff members still weren't happy with performance and reliability, and were left with the choice of upgrading the hardware or purchasing a new system.

"Prior to installing the ExaGrid system, we were dealing with long backup times and reliability issues due to the vast amount of data Veeam was pushing to the unit. We considered upgrading the NAS unit, but in the end, we decided that a new solution with built-in data deduplication would serve us well," said Todd George, technology manager at NSM Insurance Group. "We looked at various options and decided to implement the ExaGrid system because we liked its data deduplication technology, and based on our research, it seemed like it would work well with Veeam."

ExaGrid-Veeam Deliver High Dedupe, Full Backup Times Cut from 60+ Hours to 17 Hours

NSM Insurance Group installed the ExaGrid system in its main datacenter and backs up its nearly 40 virtual servers to the ExaGrid system through Veeam.

"For us, the best approach was to have Veeam push all the data to the ExaGrid system and let the ExaGrid handle the deduplication process," said George. "We've been extremely pleased with the dedupe performance."

In addition, the firm sees dedupe ratios as high as 41:1 for SQL data, with 58.5 TB of data consuming 1.375TB of disk space on the ExaGrid. NSM is currently retaining eight months of SQL data.

"Our backup speed is fantastic. Our weekly full backups used to run from Friday night to Monday morning, but now they finish in approximately 17 hours. The most impressive part is that a lot of our backup jobs run simultaneously, and we haven't even started using the additional network ports on the ExaGrid, which would undoubtedly improve our performance even more."

EXAGRID™

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.

Backup Administration Simplified by ExaGrid's Intuitive Management Interface

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.

"Normally, we work with our consulting firm to install new products, but in this particular case, we worked with the ExaGrid support engineer. I racked the system up, connected it to the network, got the management IP set up and called into our dedicated engineer, who walked me through the rest of the process," said George. "Having his expertise was really invaluable. He spent a considerable amount of time talking to me about how I wanted the system set up, and we discussed best practices so that everything was optimized for our environment."

George said that ExaGrid's straightforward and intuitive management interface helps to simplify daily administration. "ExaGrid's interface is brilliant in its minimalist approach. It's clean and simple, and it gives you lots of information right up front without the need to drill down multiple layers. All the data needed is right there in front of you," he said.

GRID Architecture Alleviates Fears of 'Rip and Replace'

The ExaGrid system can easily scale up to meet increased backup requirements in the future. 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.

"Most storage vendors seem to want to force customers into a forklift upgrade when capacity needs increase. ExaGrid is different. We looked closely at scalability and were pleased to learn that the first generation systems are compatible with systems they're selling today," said George. "We're in the insurance business, and ExaGrid's GRID architecture acts as a policy against having to 'rip and replace' our backup infrastructure when our backup needs increase."

George said that together, Veeam and ExaGrid deliver a powerful solution for NSM Insurance Group's backup needs. "The two products work extremely well together and have essentially solved our backup issues. The ExaGrid unit is a robust platform with top-notch data deduplication technology that can handle the data volume pushed by Veeam. I don't have to worry about backups anymore. They just happen consistently, each and every night," he said.

ExaGrid and Veeam

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 the built-in backup to disk capabilities of Veeam® Backup & Replication™ 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 Veeam Software



Veeam® Software develops innovative solutions for VMware backup, Hyper-V backup, and virtualization management. Veeam Backup & Replication™ is the #1 VM backup solution. Veeam ONE™ is a single solution for real-time monitoring, resource optimization and management reporting for VMware and Hyper-V. The Veeam Management Pack™ (MP) and Smart Plug-in™ (SPI) extend enterprise monitoring to VMware through Microsoft System Center and HP Operations Manager. Veeam also provides free virtualization tools. Learn more by visiting <http://www.veeam.com/>.

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