

# NorthStar Increases Retention While Spending 30% Less Time on Backup with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Victor Lee  
IT Manager

## Key Benefits:

- Increased capacity meets seven-year retention goal
- Separate retention policies is 'favorite feature'
- Replaced 'stuck in spiral' tape backup
- 30% time savings on managing backup
- Disaster recovery plan implemented, DR goal accomplished

## Customer Overview

NorthStar Group Services, Inc. is the premier facility services contractor in the United States and the largest demolition and asbestos abatement firm, offering a vast array of services to commercial, industrial, government, and private sector customers.

## Limited Retention and Time-Consuming Tape Backups Strained IT Department

NorthStar Group Services had been backing up data to tape, but long backup times, difficult restores, and the burden of managing cumbersome tape weighed heavily on its IT staff. NorthStar was rotating tapes every 30 days, and it was clear they needed a new backup strategy.

"We didn't keep anything for very long, as it made things more complicated," said Victor Lee, IT Manager at NorthStar. "We decided to increase our retention on specific data from 30 days to 7 years. A bigger problem occurred after this since we can't keep tapes in the library for too long, because the library was only good for two or three weeks. We were stuck in a spiral trying to send tapes off all the time. Recalling tapes for a restore had become a nightmare."

After looking at a few other solutions, NorthStar decided on an ExaGrid two-site solution to back up its 40TB+. The ExaGrid system supports Veritas Backup Exec, the company's backup application.

## Cross-Replication Provides Disaster Recovery Protection

In addition to increasing retention, NorthStar's other critical goal was a disaster recovery plan, and increased retention made DR even more of a challenge. "We wanted to make sure we had a copy of our data at the primary data center and a copy at the DR data center, so we started looking into storage devices and deduplication. Because it's stagnant data, we wanted to be able to compress it and get

the most performance and capacity that we could. When we learned that ExaGrid had the capability of having two-tier storage with separate retention policies, it was my favorite feature! This allowed us to save data at the current data center for 60 or 90 days and a year's worth of data at the DR site without having to recall tapes if we have a disaster. We like the flexibility and know we can easily scale as we grow," Lee said.

Lee is pleased that ExaGrid has enabled him to implement reliable DR while also spending less time managing backup. "I save hours weekly not having to manage and chase down tapes. I would estimate that I save 30% of my time. Now I can complete other projects on my to-do list," stated Lee.

The ExaGrid system has a unique landing zone where backups land straight to disk without inline processing, keeping backups fast and the backup window short. Deduplication and offsite replication occur in parallel with the backups. 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.

## Up and Running in No Time

Lee found installation to be very straightforward. "We basically just turned the power on. Day to day, there really isn't much to it. Once the ExaGrid system is configured, it's set and forget. You simply set up the drives, set up mappings with the backup software, and then run your jobs to the drives. I get email alerts if there's anything that requires our attention. I check the dashboards a couple of times a week, but our ExaGrid support engineer is very proactive - he sends us an email when

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space is tight or something is being over-utilized. It's a team effort," he said.

The ExaGrid system is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with all of the most frequently used backup applications, so an organization can retain its investment in existing applications and processes.

## Customer Support 'Makes All the Difference'

According to Lee, ExaGrid's customer support is unique. "I don't think it's common to have an assigned support engineer let alone one who is so dedicated to account success. Other vendors insist that you call the 800 number and wait for the next available person. Having someone who knows the history of our account and can jump on issues quickly makes all the difference. Our engineer is always an email away," he said.

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 assigned to individual accounts. The system is fully supported, and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

## Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality disk drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk based solution that is far more cost effective than simply backing up to straight disk. ExaGrid's patented zone-level deduplication reduces the disk space needed by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 by storing only the unique bytes across backups instead of redundant data.

Adaptive deduplication performs deduplication and replication in parallel with backups while providing full system resources to the backups for the shortest backup window. Adaptive deduplication delivers the fastest backups, and as data grows,

only ExaGrid avoids expanding backup windows by adding full appliances in a GRID. ExaGrid's unique landing zone keeps a full copy of the most recent backup on disk, delivering the fastest restores, instant VM recovery, "Instant DR," and fast tape copy. And, as data grows, ExaGrid saves up to 50% in total system costs compared to competitive solutions by avoiding costly "forklift" upgrades.

## GRID Architecture Provides Superior Scalability

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, where each appliance contains not just disk but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. When the system needs to expand, additional appliances are simply attached to the GRID. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows, and you only pay for what you need when you need it. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliances are added to the GRID, the system automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

## ExaGrid and Veritas Backup Exec

Veritas Backup Exec provides cost-effective, high-performance, and certified disk-to-disk-to-tape backup and recovery – including continuous data protection for Microsoft Exchange servers, Microsoft SQL servers, 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 Veritas Backup Exec can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Veritas Backup Exec, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Veritas 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 backup to disk.

## About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides backup storage with a unique landing zone and scale-out architecture. The landing zone provides for the fastest backups, restores and instant VM recoveries. The scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable GRID and provides for a fixed-length backup window as data grows, eliminating expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at [www.exagrid.com](http://www.exagrid.com).

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