



School System Takes Backup Window from 1.5 Hours to 7 Minutes with Veeam and ExaGrid



The Northwest Catholic
District School Board
Subsidiaries of Hope



CANADA

Key Benefits:

- ExaGrid's scalability is budget-friendly
- Comprehensive expertise of ExaGrid customer support allows for one-stop troubleshooting of entire environment
- ExaGrid-Veeam integration provides optimal deduplication rates
- Easy-to-use GUI and daily reporting allow for easy system maintenance

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Colin Drombolis

Manager of Information Systems

Customer Overview

The Northwest Catholic District School Board has six Catholic elementary schools and two K-8 school boards. The Board covers a vast geography, serving the communities of Sioux Lookout, Dryden, Atikokan, Fort Frances to Rainy River, and First Nations within the jurisdiction of the Board in Northwestern Ontario.

A Series of Unfortunate Events

Northwest Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) had been running Veritas Backup Exec to tape for a number of years and aside from the typical cumbersome nature of tape, it was a workable solution – until the school board virtualized.

To back up its new virtualized environment, the school board purchased a new backup storage solution. With a server in Dryden backing up data from the northern locations and a server in Fort Frances backing up data from the southern locations, NCDSB was able to cross-replicate at night for offsite disaster recovery protection.

"It worked very well," said Colin Drombolis, manager of information systems at NCDSB. "The seeding, the mirroring, all worked awesome – until last December when we lost one of our servers."

During the rebuild, Drombolis was asked by the vendor to plug in two USB drives to download the seeds and bring them to Fort Frances manually because it was too much data to send over the wire. However, when he plugged in the USBs, instead of mounting the USB drives, they mounted the SAN and started copying the files over.

"When they got to my SAN, they stomped on my VMware File System which started killing all my VMs. They were all wiped out, and we had to do a restore. Some of the restores worked, and some didn't. But, of course, the one that didn't work was probably the most important one, our financial HRIS.

"Luckily, two days prior, I had noticed that our backup server was failing and I did a Windows file copy of all of our data onto my workstation – and that's how we restored our data. But we were still down for a week. Fortunately, we had just finished payroll. The failure happened on a Thursday night, and payroll's done on Wednesdays. Honestly, it couldn't have happened at a better time; it was the day before Christmas vacation.



"I was working like crazy over the holiday, sleeping maybe four hours a night for three days until we got things back up and running, but it took at least a week to get everything fixed. It was horrible," said Drombolis.

Veeam and ExaGrid Take Backup Window from 1.5 Hours to 7 Minutes

After a catastrophic (and sleepless) Christmas, Drombolis immediately started looking at new backup solutions. He tested Veeam as well as a few others, and Veeam stood out.

"It was simple and the price was right, so that's what we went with. We didn't have budget for a disk-based backup solution at that time, so we bought a cheap NAS device, and we were using that until this budget year."

Veeam suggested that if Drombolis wanted data deduplication to check into ExaGrid, and he made the purchase. According to Drombolis, it was very simple to set up, the GUI is easy to use, and the reporting is very helpful.

"The ExaGrid system generates a daily report on how dedupe is doing, how much space was used in the last day, how much space is left, etc. I look at it every day, and it gives me a good picture of where I stand," he said.

According to Drombolis, Veeam and ExaGrid make an amazing team. "It used to take an hour and a half for an incremental to complete, and now it's done in under seven minutes."

Scalability, Replication, and Deduplication Key Factors

Central to Drombolis' decision to purchase ExaGrid was the ability to start with just a single ExaGrid appliance and subsequently build on it.

"I don't have to buy everything at once, and I know down the line I won't have to throw the appliance away and buy another one because it's not big enough. The scalability was very important, and so were replication and deduplication (it's doing a very good job at that). Early on, I didn't see much in the way of dedupe, but as time goes on, that's when you see the dedupe kicking in. I'm very happy with it."

ExaGrid Customer Support Goes 'Above and Beyond'

Customer support that would be considered 'above and beyond' at most other companies is what's standard at ExaGrid.

"Typically, when I have problems involving more than one vendor, I'll call customer support for the hardware, and they'll tell me it's a problem with the software; then I'll call support for the software and they'll say it's the hardware – it's pretty frustrating! One time, I ended up going online and just fixing it myself.

"But when I was having issues with ExaGrid and Veeam at one point, I talked to our customer support rep, and she worked with me to figure it out – she went above and beyond. I knew then that ExaGrid's support was going to work for us."

The ExaGrid system was designed to be easy to set up and operate. ExaGrid's industry-leading level 2 senior support engineers are assigned to individual customers, ensuring they always work with the same engineer. Customer's never have to repeat themselves to various support staff, and issues get resolved quickly.

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.