Saint Michael's College Selects ExaGrid and Veeam for Reliable Backup Storage / Cost Savings

SAINT MICHAEL'S COLLEGE FOUNDED 1904

> "We now have tighter integration, more reliable backups – and save a ton on consulting costs. It all ties back to ExaGrid, because without ExaGrid and their support, I don't think we'd be nearly as successful as we are."
>
> **Shawn Umansky**
> **Network Engineer**

Key Benefits:

- Reliable backups are now 'under the radar'
- Outstanding integration with ExaGrid and Veeam
- 'Stellar' technical support, implicit trust
- Saves cost on consulting hours
- ExaGrid dashboard provides 'snapshots,' proving stability
- Now able to focus on other key IT projects

Customer Overview

Settled in a beautiful Vermont landscape, Saint Michael's College is a 400-acre campus built on a scale that supports an outstanding educational, residential and recreational experience. Saint Michael's College puts great thought and care into what their students learn, and how they learn it. With more than 14,000 students and 30 majors, each is grounded in a meaningful liberal studies curriculum so students learn about our world, past, present and future.

Virtualization Leads to ExaGrid and Veeam

Shawn Umanksy, network engineer at Saint Michael's College, moved over to the network team in 2009 to manage Saint Michael's virtualized backup storage after the college migrated from tape backup to Veritas NetBackup and Veeam. "At the time, we actually outsourced our backup support to a local company. They're the ones that set it up and maintained backup 24/7. Keeping NetBackup running took a lot of care and feeding. The system simply wasn't reliable for us and never quite became what I consider to be 'fully stable,'" said Umansky.

Wasted Time Troubleshooting and Backup Window Impacting Work Day

"There was always a server causing issues when a backup job failed. We'd spend hours trying to figure out the origin of the issue; needless to say, doing a full backup every night was not easy. Now, with ExaGrid, we start our first job at 7:00pm for our ERP system followed by the big job at 10:00pm – that's when all of our servers, which are all grouped together, are all backed up. There is ample window and disk space now. In the past, we weren't able to get everything backed up and jobs would stop before they were completing, often impacting network performance the next day.

"ExaGrid just runs – in terms of ongoing care and feeding, there isn't a lot needed. The only other time I have to do something is when there is a failed disk or an upgrade with either Veeam or ExaGrid. Both of those are rare and simple fixes," Umansky said.

Stellar Support, Expertise and Guidance

"ExaGrid support is amazing. We've had what I would consider to be 'stellar' support. Our assigned support engineer is phenomenal. I've worked with him since I started supporting our storage and infrastructure. The consistency has been great, because he knows our systems and knows exactly what I expect. He vets new updates and helps me take care of everything; he's an extension of our team," said Umansky.

"Our support engineer will even ask if I want to schedule time to work on an update together. If there is a patch fix, he'll take care of that for us on the back end – I just give him a window and he'll just confirm when it's done. The ExaGrid team gives me peace of mind," 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.

"I have very little time to spend on backup storage. I wear many hats, and backup storage is only one of them, so I don't have the depth at any one particular direction. I know enough to keep them running – and I clearly know when I need escalation. My support experience with ExaGrid has built a very strong relationship with the company. I salute our customer support engineer for that. He brings expertise to the table. I am to the point where I am close to implicit trust," said Umansky.

ExAGRID®

Cost Reduction with Tighter Integration

"We had been leveraging an outsourced engineer for quite a while as an extension of our team to assist with backup storage management because we're thinly staffed. We try to balance key projects with consultants when possible. We were relying pretty heavily on consulting hours to keep our backups working. It just so happened that as we started to evaluate adding Veeam to our solution, our consultant who had been managing our backups, left the company.

"We suddenly found ourselves in a situation where we didn't have the in-house skill set to take care of that service anymore, and that was a big challenge for us. Not having the extra help really pushed us to bring that skill set back in-house, and ExaGrid and Veeam were integral for that. We now have tighter integration, more reliable backups – and save a ton on consulting costs. It all ties back because without ExaGrid and their support, I don't think we'd be nearly as successful as we are," said Umansky.

Saint Michael's has a two-site solution – a primary site, which is their DR site. Because their co-location is so stable, they run that as primary. They have a 10GB link between that and their campus, which is now their data center backup target. Most of Saint Michael's virtual servers are systems running in Williston, Vermont, which is the college's co-location. "The integration between Veeam and ExaGrid is amazing – everything is fast and reliable," said Umansky.

Simplified Management Makes for Productive Work

"We're a VM shop. We use replication of all servers back to our campus, and we also replicate between our ExaGrid appliances. Our total backup is close to 50TB at each site, and we replicate between the two.

"The best compliment I can give to ExaGrid is that I don't have to spend a lot of time thinking about backup. The ExaGrid system works; it does what it needs to do. It's not at the forefront of my mind, and with everything else going on, that's a good thing. Once a month, in preparation for our staff meeting, I share a scorecard of backup information showing a snapshot of where things currently are. For the past several years, our backup numbers have been consistently stable. We have plenty of landing space, ample retention space, and there are no concerns on the horizon. This certainly makes for a productive meeting! Keeping backup under the radar is the way it should be," said Umansky.

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 Veeam Backup & Replication's built-in backup-to-disk capabilities 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.

Veeam-ExaGrid Deduplication

Veeam uses the information from VMware and Hyper-V and provides deduplication on a "per-job" basis, finding the matching areas of all the virtual disks within a backup job and using metadata to reduce the overall footprint of the backup data. Veeam also has a "dedupe friendly" compression setting which further reduces the size of the Veeam backups in a way that allows the ExaGrid system to achieve further deduplication. This approach typically achieves a 2:1 deduplication ratio.

ExaGrid is architected from the ground up to protect virtualized environments and provide deduplication as backups are taken. ExaGrid will achieve a 3:1 up to 5:1 additional deduplication rate. The net result is a combined Veeam and ExaGrid deduplication rate of 6:1 upwards to 10:1, which greatly reduces the amount of disk storage required.

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, in a modular fashion. 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.

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**.