

SeaBright Ensures Better Backups with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Jeff Wilkinson
Sr. Network Engineer
SeaBright Insurance Company

Customer Overview

SeaBright Insurance Company is a specialty provider of niche workers' compensation insurance for upper middle-market employers with severity exposures. Based in Seattle, Washington, SeaBright distributes its maritime, alternative dispute resolution and state act products in selected regions nationwide through independent insurance brokers and through its in-house wholesale broker affiliate, PointSure Insurance Services.

Existing System Leads to Compliance Issues

For years, SeaBright Insurance had been backing up its data electronically using an online backup system. The solution backed up data locally to a disk array and then sent a copy of the backup to a designated offsite location for storage, where the data was kept for a year. The legacy system didn't support tape so it was nearly impossible for the company to meet retention periods mandated by Sarbanes-Oxley.

As part of its business continuity plan, the IT department also had an internal mandate to ensure that it could bring its production environment up within 36 hours in the event of a disaster, something that was also difficult with its current solution.

"Some of our data needs to be retained for many years," said Jeff Wilkinson, senior network engineer for SeaBright Insurance. "The obvious answer was to back that information up to tape, but we didn't have that capability with our legacy solution."

SeaBright began to reevaluate its backup strategy and decided to bring its backup capabilities back in-house. The IT department liked the speed and simplicity of backing up to disk but needed a system that would provide the ability to back up to tape for long term storage.

Two-site ExaGrid System Provides Replication, Support for Tape Copy

After considering several competitive solutions, SeaBright chose a two-site ExaGrid system in combination with Symantec's Backup Exec™ backup application. SeaBright backs up all of its data to the ExaGrid system, including its file server data, Exchange, SQL databases, and VMware systems.

SeaBright placed one ExaGrid system at its datacenter in Scottsdale, Arizona and a second site ExaGrid system offsite in Austin, Texas. The two sites are connected via a dedicated DS3 line.

"We chose the ExaGrid system because it is easily scalable, provided offsite replication capability and it gave us the data deduplication we needed," said Wilkinson. "The ExaGrid was more cost-effective than the other solutions we looked at and it provided all of the features we were looking for and more."

The IT staff at SeaBright now performs full backups each weekend and incremental backups each night onto the ExaGrid system in Scottsdale. The data is then automatically replicated to its Austin site for disaster recovery purposes. Additionally, certain types of data are backed up to disk quarterly for long term storage. The company is more easily able to maintain full compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley and also meet all of its business continuity goals.



Data De-duplication Reduces Data, Speeds Data Transmission Between Sites

“ExaGrid’s data de-duplication technology has been very effective at reducing our data, and it has made the replication between sites fast and efficient,” said Wilkinson. “Our compression numbers have been high and we’re able to keep a considerable amount of data on our ExaGrid system.”

ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with data de-duplication, 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 de-duplication 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 byte-level data de-duplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Easy Scalability, Proactive Customer Support

One of the big challenges that SeaBright had with its legacy system was scalability. In addition to writing a copy of the backup data to the company’s designated offsite location, the system also wrote a copy of the backup to a local disk array. However, when SeaBright outgrew the system, the upgrade process took 36 hours and the firm couldn’t perform backups during that time.

“With the ExaGrid, we can add storage on the fly and the system will automatically load balance the data across multiple disks,” said Wilkinson. “And because we can add capacity in small increments, it’s cost-effective because we only need to purchase enough disk to meet our needs.”

ExaGrid’s GRID architecture provides easy scalability, so the system can grow as SeaBright’s backup requirements grow. When plugged into a switch, additional ExaGrid systems virtualize into one another, appearing as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

ExaGrid’s in-house customer support was also an important factor in choosing the ExaGrid system.

About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

Customers worldwide depend on ExaGrid Systems to solve their backup problems—effectively and permanently. ExaGrid’s disk-based, scale-out GRID architecture adjusts to increasing backup demands due to constantly growing data volumes. It is the only solution that combines compute with capacity as well as a unique landing zone to permanently shorten backup windows and eliminate expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at www.exagrid.com.

“The system was easy to install and configure and ExaGrid’s customer support team has been very proactive. ExaGrid provides a very high level of support for the product and to us, that’s a huge advantage,” said Wilkinson.

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 byte-level data de-duplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid’s byte-level data de-duplication technology stores only the changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk space 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.

ExaGrid is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, so organizations can retain their investment in existing applications.

ExaGrid can be used at a primary site and at a second site to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with a live data repository or for disaster recovery. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid’s byte-level data de-duplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

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