



The Gray Insurance Company's Switch to ExaGrid Increases Data Security and Saves on Staff Time

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Brian O'Neil
Network Engineer

Key Benefits:

- The company's switch from tape to ExaGrid SEC system adds data security
- Data is restored from ExaGrid-Veeam solution within minutes
- ExaGrid system is easy to manage, saving on staff time

Customer Overview

Founded in 1953, The Gray Insurance Company is a family-owned, relationship-based and service-focused company headquartered in southeast Louisiana. Gray provides workers' compensation, automobile, and general liability coverage on a specific and aggregate basis. The Gray program was designed to respond to overlapping state and federal jurisdictions and their complex contractual arrangements.

Upgrade from Tape to ExaGrid-Veeam Solution

The Gray Insurance Company had initially backed up its data to LTO4 tape drives using IBM Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM) but the company's IT staff found that backups took too long using this solution and were frustrated by the resources that it took to swap tapes. The IT staff was also concerned with security as the tapes were physical items that needed to be transported offsite and also because data on those tapes was not encrypted. "We feel more secure now that data is stored on our ExaGrid system which encrypts data at rest," said Brian O'Neil, the company's network engineer.

O'Neil had used an ExaGrid system while in a previous position and was happy to work with the backup solution again. In addition to installing ExaGrid, the company also installed Veeam, and O'Neil has found that the two products integrate well together. "The combined solution of ExaGrid and Veeam has been a lifesaver and now our backups are running without any issues," he said.

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. ExaGrid fully leverages Veeam's built-in backup-to-disk capabilities, and ExaGrid's adaptive data deduplication



provides additional data 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 to further shrink backups.

Data Restored Quickly from ExaGrid-Veeam Solution

O'Neil backs up the company's data in daily incrementals, weekly synthetic fulls as well as weekly, monthly and yearly backup copy jobs for retention. There is a wide variety of data to back up; including SQL data, Exchange servers, Citrix servers, and Linux boxes, as well as images related to insurance claims, which tend to be larger file sizes.

"Our daily incrementals take an hour and our weekly fulls take a day, but that's to be expected given the amount of data we are backing up," said O'Neil. "I've only have positive things to say about restoring data from our ExaGrid-Veeam solution. Whether I've had to restore a single file or an entire VM,



I can do so within a matter of minutes, without issue. I'm amazed how my level of access can simplify a single file restore, without restoring the whole VM. It's great!"

ExaGrid writes backups directly to a disk-cache Landing Zone, avoiding inline processing and ensuring the highest possible backup performance, which results in the shortest backup window. Adaptive Deduplication performs deduplication and replication in parallel with backups while providing full system resources to the backups for the shortest backup window. Available system cycles are utilized to perform deduplication and offsite replication for an optimal recovery point at the disaster recovery site. Once complete, the onsite data is protected and immediately available in its full unduplicated form for fast restores, VM Instant Recoveries, and tape copies while the offsite data is ready for disaster recovery.

ExaGrid Offers Scalability and Enhanced Security

After a few years of using ExaGrid, The Gray Insurance Company decided to switch to ExaGrid's SEC models and took advantage of the trade-in deals that ExaGrid offers its current customers. "We needed to increase our storage capacity so we traded in the appliances we originally bought for larger, encrypted SEC models," said O'Neil. "The transition to the new appliances was easy, especially considering that we had to copy many terabytes of data from the older appliances to the new ones. Our ExaGrid support engineer helped us through the entire process and everything went very smoothly."

The data security capabilities in the ExaGrid product line, including optional enterprise-class Self-Encrypting Drive (SED) technology, provide a high level of security for data at rest and can help reduce IT drive retirement costs in the data center. All data on the disk drive is encrypted automatically without any action required by users. Encryption and authentication keys are never accessible to outside systems where they can be stolen. Unlike software-based encryption methods, SEDs typically have a better throughput rate, particularly during extensive read operations. Optional data encryption at rest is available for the EX7000 models and above. Data can be encrypted during replication between ExaGrid systems. Encryption occurs on the sending ExaGrid system, is encrypted as it traverses the WAN, and is decrypted at the target ExaGrid system. This eliminates the need for a VPN to perform encryption across the WAN.

About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides tiered backup storage with a unique disk-cache Landing Zone, long-term retention repository and scale-out architecture. ExaGrid's Landing Zone enables the fastest backups, restores, and instant VM recoveries. The retention repository offers the lowest cost for long-term retention. ExaGrid's scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable system. Learn more at www.exagrid.com.

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The ExaGrid system can easily scale to accommodate data growth. ExaGrid's computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, appliances of any size or age can be mixed and matched in a single system with capacities of up to a 2PB full backup plus retention and an ingest rate of up to 432TB per hour. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

Easy-to-Manage System Saves On Staff Time

O'Neil appreciates ExaGrid's support model of working with an assigned customer support engineer. "Our ExaGrid support engineer goes out of his way to help, and he has a great work ethic. He's very knowledgeable about ExaGrid and even helps us with Veeam at times. He keeps me updated about ExaGrid's firmware updates and is very accommodating to my schedule if any changes need to be made to our system."

In addition, O'Neil finds the ExaGrid system easy to use. "Our backups are much easier to manage now and that's freed up a lot of my time to work on other things that may take priority. With ExaGrid, I can log in and see everything on a single pane of glass, including data usage and consumption. The management interface is straightforward and the overall aesthetics make it easy to see what's going on in just a glance. I couldn't do that with the Tivoli system, it was command line-based and it was cumbersome for the IT department to manage," 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 level 2 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.



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