EXAGRID®

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

THE G RAY INSURANCE COMPANY

USA

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

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Brian O'Neil
Network Engineer

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 Spectrum Protect (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.

ExaGrid and Veeam can instantly recover a file or VMware virtual machine by running it directly from the ExaGrid appliance in the event that the file is lost, corrupted or encrypted or the primary storage VM becomes unavailable. This instant recovery is possible because of ExaGrid's Landing Zone – a high-speed disk cache on the ExaGrid appliance that retains the most recent backups in their complete form. Once the primary storage environment has been brought back to a working state, the VM backed up on the ExaGrid appliance can then be migrated to primary storage for continued operation.

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 for a strong recovery point (RPO). As data is being deduplicated to the repository, it can also be replicated to a second ExaGrid site or the public cloud for disaster recovery (DR).

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. 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.

ExaGrid's appliance models can be mixed and matched into a single scale-out system allowing a full backup of up to 2.7PB with a combined ingest rate of 488TB/hr, in a single system. The appliances automatically join the scale-out system. Each appliance includes the appropriate amount of processor, memory, disk, and bandwidth for the data size. By adding compute with capacity, the backup window remains fixed in length as the data grows. Automatic load balancing across all repositories allows for full utilization of all appliances. Data is deduplicated into an offline repository, and additionally, data is globally deduplicated across all repositories.

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 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 operate. ExaGrid's industry-leading level 2 senior support engineers are assigned to individual customers, ensuring they always work with the same engineer. Customers never have to repeat themselves to various support staff, and issues get resolved quickly.

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**.