Township High School District 113 Opts for Scalability, Selects ExaGrid over Data Domain

Customer Overview

Township High School District 113 serves 3,750 students in two schools, Highland Park and Deerfield High Schools, from the communities of Deerfield, Highland Park, Highwood, Bannockburn and Riverwoods, Illinois. Both schools are accredited by the State of Illinois and the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

Backing Up Fast Growing Data a Constant Issue for IT Staff

Township High School District 113 had been grappling with how to back up and protect its rapidly growing data set for some time. The school district had been backing up information to a primary datacenter and then sending it to a dual LTO-4 autoloader tape drive located at a disaster recovery site, but backups often couldn't be completed in time to meet backup windows.

"We couldn't keep up with nightly backups, and we had begun staggering our weekly full backups to run on alternating weekends because we couldn't complete everything by Monday morning," said Ronald Kasbohm, director of technology at Township High School District 113. "In addition, our tapes and drives had started failing. We were extremely concerned about performance and our ability to recover from a disaster. Backups were taking up more and more of our time, and we finally decided to begin looking at other alternatives on the market."

ExaGrid Delivers Superior Scalability and Tight Integration with Leading Backup Applications

After considering products from both ExaGrid and EMC Data Domain, Township High School District 113 purchased a dual-site ExaGrid disk-based backup system with data deduplication based on discussions with other school districts and vendors. Data is replicated between the two sites in case it is needed for disaster recovery.

"We spoke with several other school districts in our area who use ExaGrid, and they gave the system rave reviews. We also heard very positive comments from vendors we work with," said Kasbohm. "Scalability was a factor we looked very closely at. When we compared the ExaGrid and Data Domain systems, we felt that the ExaGrid was more scalable because we can easily expand the system to add both capacity and performance without a forklift upgrade."

The ExaGrid system can easily scale to accommodate more data as the company's data grows. ExaGrid's GRID computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, different sized configurations can be mixed and matched into a single GRID system with capacities of up to a 130TB full backup plus retention. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

Kasbohm said that another key reason the district chose the ExaGrid system was its tight integration with leading backup applications.

"The ExaGrid system works with all the major backup applications, so we can choose the best solutions for our environment. We knew we wanted to continue using our existing application, Backup Exec with OST, and were easily able integrate the two products," he said. "We recently decided that it would be more advantageous to back up our 77 virtual machines to Veeam. Because the ExaGrid supports it, it'll be easy to do."

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> **Ronald Kasbohm**
> **Director of Technology**
> **Township High School**
> **District 113**

EXAGRID™

Backup Times Reduced, Faster Restores

Since installing the ExaGrid system, the district's full backups take only ten hours instead of running throughout the weekend as they did with tape.

"Now that we've installed the ExaGrid system, I'm never concerned about our backup window. One of the major differences is that we're able to run multiple backup jobs simultaneously now, which makes everything far more efficient. Our backups run so quickly and consistently now that we're considering running full backups every night," Kasbohm said.

ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication technology also helps to speed backup times and reduce the amount of data stored.

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

With tape, restores were a constant source of frustration, said Kasbohm. However, restoring data from the ExaGrid system is far less time consuming and complex, he said.

"We used to have to get someone to pull tapes out of our vault, go over to our disaster recovery site, swap the tapes and then pull the data off the tape. The whole process used to take a half a day. Restores are so much faster with the ExaGrid. I was recently able to restore large AutoCAD files for multiple students in less than 15 minutes. It's really a game-changer," said Kasbohm.

Easy Setup, Knowledgeable Customer Support

Installing the ExaGrid system was easy to do, said Kasbohm. "Setup was unbelievably smooth. We racked the systems and our ExaGrid support engineer called us up, finished the setup, and walked us through the system. The documentation is easy to follow and clear-cut, but it was also nice to know that we had a live support person with us to make sure everything went well," he said. "Our ExaGrid support engineer is absolutely fantastic. He's easy to reach and really knows his way around the ExaGrid system. He also knows Backup Exec inside and out, which has been an enormous help to us."

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 dedicated to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

Reduced Management and Administration Makes Day-to-Day Operations a Breeze

Kasbohm noted that he used to spend an entire day managing backups but now spends only an hour per week. "I used to spend all day on Monday just dealing with issues stemming from our weekend backup jobs. Now, our backups run flawlessly each and every night," he said. "Having the ExaGrid system in place really has taken the worry and stress out of our backups. I've always been paranoid about backups, so I love the reliability and peace of mind that the ExaGrid system gives me."

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.

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

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**.