Insurer Takes the Risk Out of Backups with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

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Josh Jarvis
Chief Technology Officer

Key Benefits:

- Post-process deduplication ensures the company's backups run as quickly as possible
- Deduplication is performed by Veeam and then again when the data hits the ExaGrid landing zone
- The company can easily and painlessly scale the system as data increases
- ExaGrid appliances are backward compatible, so USA Risk Group protects its investment in the future

Customer Overview

USA Risk Group is the nation's leading independent provider of alternative risk management services. The company develops innovative solutions that enable its clients to maintain affordable and flexible insurance coverage, improve cash flow, and control expenses. The company's independent managers provide strictly impartial analyses and recommendations, and draw from a wide variety of non-traditional solutions to create a custom designed product, uniquely suited to meet individual client needs.

Concerns about Disaster Recovery, Expanding Backup Window, Virtualization

USA Risk Group manages insurance programs for Fortune 500 organizations, so it's imperative that client and business data is fully backed up and easily recoverable. The company has a significant number of offshore locations and had been backing up to a tape library in a Vermont colocation center, but the firm's IT staff was concerned about its ability to retrieve data in the event of a disaster, and backup times were getting increasingly longer.

"Technically, the information we back up isn't our own, so to me, it's even more critical that the data is properly backed up and recoverable at a moment's notice," said Josh Jarvis, Chief Technology Officer for USA Risk Group. "Tape is unreliable and we were concerned about disaster recovery. We started to push up against our backup window and were worried about how that would affect our network speed."

ExaGrid and Veeam Deliver Faster, More Reliable Backups

According to Jarvis, USA Risk Group decided to search for a disk-based backup appliance capable of delivering fast backups and restores, and chose the ExaGrid system after looking at several different solutions. "We researched a couple of other backup solutions, but the issue we had with every single one of them was the amount of preprocess work that needed to be done before the data hit the disk. In each case, backup speed was a major concern for us," he said. "With the ExaGrid system, the data is backed up to a landing zone before the deduplication process begins so backups run as quickly as possible. And the proof is there -- our backups are significantly faster than they were before."

USA Risk Group virtualized much of its environment at the same time it implemented the ExaGrid system and decided to install Veeam Backup & Replication because of its tight integration with ExaGrid.

"We are really happy with how the two products work together. Veeam deduplicates the data before it gets to the ExaGrid system, and then the system reduces it even further after it hits the landing zone," he said.

ExaGrid combines standard compression along with zone-level 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 the changes from backup to backup, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

EXAGRID

Superior Scalability Means No Forklift Upgrades

Scalability was another big selling feature, Jarvis said.

"We purchased the ExaGrid system with the intent to scale it as our backup data increases. With the ExaGrid, we can add more appliances to increase capacity without doing a forklift upgrade. The other thing that impressed us is that ExaGrid systems are backward compatible. A lot of times, companies upgrade so much internally in products that it's just not possible to keep older systems running in conjunction with newer ones. That's not the case with ExaGrid," he said.

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, and when the system needs to be expanded, additional appliances are attached to the GRID, bringing with them additional processing power, memory, and bandwidth as well as disk. 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 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.

Proactive Customer Support

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.

"ExaGrid's user interface gives me access to all the information I need to manage the system in one central place," he said. "ExaGrid's support staff is readily available in the event that I need help. In fact, when we first set up the ExaGrid system, we purchased Veeam 7.0, and the ExaGrid team went out of their way to get everything up and running optimally."

Jarvis said that he's more confident in the company's ability to back up and restore critical client information.

"Installing the ExaGrid system has taken the worry out of our backups. We looked at a lot of different products, and we're confident that ExaGrid was the right choice for our environment – it's taken the worry out of our backups."

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.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality disk drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is far more cost effective than simply backing up to straight disk. The ExaGrid system is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, so organizations can retain their investment in existing applications and processes. ExaGrid appliances can be used at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories for disaster recovery.

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**.

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