

VSAC Shortens Backup Window, Saves Time with ExaGrid Disk-Based Backup

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Brian Blow
Network Systems
Administrator

Key Benefits:

- Easy to install
- Much shorter backup window
- Second site provides disaster recovery protection
- Customer support engineer knows the VSAC environment "inside-out"
- Seamless integration with Symantec Backup Exec
- GRID architecture for effortless expansion and scalability

Customer Overview

The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) was created in 1965 as a public nonprofit agency to assist Vermonters who want to go to college or pursue other training after high school. They provide grants, loans, scholarships, and career and education planning information.

Relying Solely on Tape Led to Lengthy Backup Process

The IT department at VSAC relied on two tape drives to back up its data on a daily basis. With a combination of over 130 virtual and physical machines in place, the backup process was long and tedious. Backups would begin at about 2:00 pm in the afternoon and sometimes weren't complete until 9:30 am the next morning. The tapes were then stored offsite so restores required putting in a request to get the tapes from a storage facility. If the tapes were needed quickly, getting them required a car ride. "All of our tapes are stored offsite, so if I needed the tapes right away, I got in my car and drove over to retrieve them. I knew there had to be a better, more time efficient way to complete this process," said Brian Blow, network systems administrator at VSAC.

ExaGrid Delivers Faster, More Cost-Effective Solution

VSAC needed a disk-based data backup solution that was cost effective, fast, and scalable for future needs. It also had to work seamlessly with VSAC's existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec. The IT team evaluated several disk-based storage solutions, including EMC Data Domain, Unitrends Enterprise Backup, and ExaGrid. The Data Domain solution was too expensive, and VSAC needed more than the software solution offered by Unitrends. VSAC implemented the ExaGrid disk-based backup solution because of its ease of use, scalability, performance, and price.

Blow was impressed with how easy the ExaGrid system is to use right from the start. "The hardest part of the installation was getting the appliance out of the box. It could not have been easier," he said.

ExaGrid Delivers Shorter Backup Times, Strong Data Deduplication

The backup process with the ExaGrid is also going very well. According to Blow, "Our backups are completed very quickly now. I start the process, go get a cup of coffee, and it's done when I come back." In addition to shorter backup windows, Blow reports that data deduplication ratios at VSAC have been as high as 30:1, and a recent restore took just 15 minutes to complete.

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. With ExaGrid disk-based backup appliances, backups are written directly to a disk landing zone, avoiding inline processing, ensuring the highest possible backup performance resulting 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,

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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.

Exceptional Customer Support

Blow is very pleased with ExaGrid's customer support. "The ExaGrid customer support engineer I work with is very thorough and knows my environment inside-out. I consider him to be a member of my team. The few times we've had issues, he's gotten right on it and spent whatever time it took to fix the problem," 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 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.

GRID Architecture Provides Effortless Scalability

VSAC is installing another ExaGrid at a second site for replication purposes. The replicated data will then be copied to tape and stored as an additional backup source for disaster recovery purposes. ExaGrid's GRID architecture streamlines this process for timely and efficient storage of critical data.

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, so when the system needs to expand, additional appliances are attached to the GRID, bringing with them not only additional disk but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliances are added to the GRID, the ExaGrid automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

ExaGrid and Symantec Backup Exec

Symantec Backup Exec is the gold standard in Windows data recovery, providing 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. It also supports single-drive libraries, encryption, and disaster recovery. High-performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection and recovery, 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.

About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

ExaGrid provides backup storage with a unique landing zone and scale-out architecture. The landing zone provides for the fastest backups, restores and instant VM recoveries. The scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable GRID and provides for a fixed-length backup window as data grows, eliminating expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at www.exagrid.com.