EXAGRID®

SEMCO ENERGY's Move to ExaGrid Results in Dramatically Faster, More Efficient Backups

SEMCOENERGY
GAS COMPANY

USA

Key Benefits:

- Seamless integration with Veritas Backup Exec
- Backup administration time dropped 90%
- Cost-effective and efficient
- Second site disaster recovery solution
- Cuts backup window in half, 24 to 12 hours

"Our IT department's backup administration work has dropped about 90 percent since we started using ExaGrid. The whole tape management process has been eliminated. Now all those hours we'd spend on handling tape can be spent on other important IT initiatives."

Lary O'Connor
System Administrator LAN/WAN

Customer Overview

SEMCO ENERGY Gas Company, headquartered in Port Huron, Michigan, is a regulated public utility that delivers natural gas to approximately 300,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in service territories in the southern half of the state's Lower Peninsula (including in and around the cities of Albion, Battle Creek, Holland, Niles, Port Huron, and Three Rivers) and in the central, eastern, and western parts of the state's Upper Peninsula.

Long Backup Windows and Tape Administration Headaches Take Their Toll

SEMCO ENERGY relied on backing up its data to SAN disk and then copying that data onto tape. The company's data typically included Microsoft-based files, server backups, Exchange backups, SharePoint, SQL and UNIX server backups as well as VMware backups.

As the company's data requirements grew, so did its backup windows and instances of tape failures. Backups regularly took about 24 hours including a day to back up to disk and a second day to duplicate it to tape. According to SEMCO ENERGY System Administrator LAN/WAN Lary O'Connor, managing tapes also became increasingly frustrating. His IT group used to spend two to four hours a day managing the company's tape libraries including exporting tapes, documenting the exports, sending tapes offsite and checking tapes back in.

"Our data requirements kept growing so our backup issues became even more magnified. It also wasn't very cost effective to use our existing SAN disk solution, so we had to make a change," said O'Connor.

ExaGrid Works with Existing Backup Application to Cut Backup Window in Half, Increase Overall Efficiencies

After careful evaluation of all their options, O'Connor and the rest of his team decided that it was necessary to start phasing out tape. It was crucial for SEMCO ENERGY to not only find a more reliable and scalable solution for data retention but also one that was more cost effective than their current SAN disk/tape backup solution. After thoroughly researching various solutions, SEMCO ENERGY selected ExaGrid's disk-based backup with deduplication solution over several competing solutions. The ExaGrid system works

seamlessly with SEMCO's existing backup application, Veritas BackupExec, at a primary site and also at a secondary site for disaster recovery.

"Cost and the ability to leverage our existing backup infrastructure were key factors for us in selecting ExaGrid," said O'Connor. "We didn't want to just throw away our existing IT investment. We wanted a solution like ExaGrid that could work in conjunction with our backup application to provide the best backups and restores."

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).

"The nice thing was that there was no learning curve needed when we implemented ExaGrid with BackupExec. Our backups still worked the same," said O'Connor. "ExaGrid just sits on the backend and replaces your existing tape or disk application so it's a very seamless transmission."
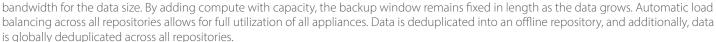
Since implementing ExaGrid, SEMCO ENERGY has seen dramatic results. The company's backup window has been cut in half, from 24 hours to

about 12. In addition, SEMCO ENERGY's IT department saves about 20 hours a week that it used to spend manually processing and administering tape media.

"Our IT department's backup administration work has dropped about 90 percent since we started using ExaGrid. The whole tape management process has been eliminated. Now all those hours we'd spend on handling tape can be spent on other important IT initiatives," said O'Connor.

Flexibility and Scalability to Meet Growing Data Requirements and Company Growth

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.

"We love the fact that ExaGrid can easily scale as our data grows without costing us an arm and a leg," said O'Connor. "ExaGrid allows us to seamlessly add additional servers if we decide to increase our retention down the road."

World-class Technical Support

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.

"Our experience with ExaGrid's technical support team has been excellent. We have a dedicated support manager who is very proactive and knowledgeable about the product but also our environment," said O'Connor.

ExaGrid and Veritas Backup Exec

Veritas Backup Exec provides cost-effective, high-performance backup and recovery – including continuous data protection for Microsoft Exchange servers, Microsoft SQL servers, 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 Veritas Backup Exec can look to ExaGrid Tiered Backup Storage for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Veritas Backup Exec, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Veritas Backup Exec, using ExaGrid 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 ExaGrid for backup to disk.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines enterprise drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is far more cost effective than simply backing up to disk with deduplication or using backup software deduplication to disk. ExaGrid's patented zone-level deduplication reduces the disk space needed by a range of 10:1 to 50:1, depending on the data types and retention periods, by storing only the unique objects across backups instead of redundant data. Adaptive Deduplication performs deduplication and replication in parallel with backups. As data is being deduplicated to the repository, it is also replicated to a second ExaGrid site or the public cloud for disaster recovery (DR).

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**.

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