

# Scalable ExaGrid System Provides Reliable Backup Window as Ascot's Data Grows

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



"We don't need to worry about our backups. ExaGrid just works and it's so simple to use, especially compared with other backup products I've used in the past."

**Lewis Vickery**  
Infrastructure Engineer

## Key Benefits:

- Ascot scaled its ExaGrid systems at both sites by adding more appliances as needed
- ExaGrid-Veeam solution restores data and whole servers quickly, with 'just a few clicks'
- Customer support is 'better than the rest' with helpful, responsive ExaGrid engineers
- System is 'easy to manage,' has reduced IT staff time spent on backup

## Customer Overview

Ascot Underwriting Limited, based in London, is the managing agent for Syndicate 1414 at Lloyd's, and a leading global specialty insurance underwriter. Ascot's expertise spans several lines of business including Property, Energy, Cargo, Terrorism and Political Risk, Marine Hull and Liability, Casualty, Personal Accident, Healthcare, Treaty, and Specie and Fine Art.

## Time-Consuming Tape Replaced with ExaGrid and Veeam

Ascot Underwriting had been backing up its data to tape using Veritas Backup Exec, which the IT staff found time-consuming to manage. The company decided to look into another solution that would be easier to use and provide quicker backups and restores, and chose to replace the tape solution with ExaGrid and Veeam. Ascot installed an ExaGrid system at its primary site and its disaster recovery (DR) site, and established cross-replication between the systems.

Lewis Vickery, Ascot's infrastructure engineer, backs up data in daily incrementals and synthetic weekly fulls, and appreciates that the backups stay on schedule. "We start our backup jobs at 8:00 p.m. and they are always finished by the morning." ExaGrid's award-winning scale-out architecture provides customers with a consistent backup window regardless of data growth. Its unique landing zone retains the most recent backup in its full undeduplicated form, enabling the fastest restores, offsite tape copies, and instant recoveries.

## Quick Restores in 'Just a Few Clicks'

Vickery has found that when data needs to be restored, it's a simple process using ExaGrid and Veeam. "All of the restores have been quick—it takes just a few clicks to get a server back!"

ExaGrid writes backups directly to a disk "landing zone," avoiding inline processing and ensuring the highest possible backup



performance, which results in the shortest backup window. "Adaptive" deduplication performs data deduplication and replication in parallel with backups while providing full system resources to the backups. Available system cycles are utilized to perform deduplication and offsite replication for an optimal recovery point at the DR site. Once complete, the onsite data is protected and immediately available in its full undeduplicated form for fast restores, VM Instant Recoveries, and tape copies while the offsite data is ready for recovery in the event of a disaster.

ExaGrid and Veeam can instantly recover a VMware virtual machine (VM) by running it directly from the ExaGrid appliance in the event that the primary storage VM becomes unavailable. This is possible because of ExaGrid's landing zone – a high-speed cache on the ExaGrid appliance that retains the most recent backups in complete form. Once the primary storage environment has been brought back to a working state, the VM running on the ExaGrid appliance can then be migrated to primary storage for continued operation.

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## Scalable System Accommodates Data Growth

As Ascot's data has grown, Vickery has scaled out the ExaGrid systems by adding appliances at both its primary site and its DR site. "We recently installed the new ExaGrid appliances and it was quick and simple—it was as easy as popping them into racks and then configuring them to the systems, with the guidance of our ExaGrid support engineer. It's great that we can add more resources as needed."

The ExaGrid system can easily scale to accommodate data growth. ExaGrid's computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, appliances of any size or age can be mixed and matched in a single system with capacities of up to a 2PB full backup plus retention and an ingest rate of up to 432TB per hour. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

## Well-Supported System is Easy to Manage

Vickery finds that managing backups on the ExaGrid system is uncomplicated and straightforward. "We don't need to worry about our backups. ExaGrid just works and it's so simple to use, especially compared with other backup products I've used in the past. We can log into the GUI and see everything, making it quick and easy to manage. The support is better than the rest, as well.

"ExaGrid support has always been helpful whenever there has been an issue, whether we've needed to swap a failing disk or assistance with configuring a new appliance. It's easy to reach our support engineer and he's been great to work with," said Vickery. 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.

## About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides hyper-converged secondary storage (HCSS) for backup with a unique landing zone and scale-out architecture. The landing zone enables the fastest backups, restores, and instant VM recoveries. The scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable system and ensures a fixed-length backup window as data grows, eliminating expensive and disruptive forklift upgrades. Learn more at [www.exagrid.com](http://www.exagrid.com).

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## ExaGrid and Veeam

Vickery feels that Veeam integrates with ExaGrid "quite well" and has found the pairing of the two to be a solid backup solution. 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.

Veeam uses the information from VMware and Hyper-V and provides deduplication on a "per-job" basis, finding the matching areas of all the virtual disks within a backup job and using metadata to reduce the overall footprint of the backup data. Veeam also has a "dedupe friendly" compression setting which further reduces the size of the Veeam backups in a way that allows the ExaGrid system to achieve further deduplication. This approach typically achieves a 2:1 deduplication ratio.

ExaGrid is architected from the ground up to protect virtualized environments and provide deduplication as backups are taken. ExaGrid will achieve a 3:1 up to 5:1 additional deduplication rate. The net result is a combined Veeam and ExaGrid deduplication rate of 6:1 upwards to 10:1, which greatly reduces the amount of disk storage required.

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