Ipswich Borough Council Shortens Backup times, Speeds File Restores with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

"We are expanding our use of VMware and it was becoming a real challenge to put the images onto tape. With the ExaGrid system, we are receiving 61:1 compression for our VMware images and our recovery times are far better. We can recover a VMware server in about ten minutes. With tape, recovering the same VMware server would have taken half a day."

Howard Gaskin
IT Infrastructure Manager
Ipswich Borough Council

Customer Overview

Ipswich is a multi-cultural centre for business, culture, entertainment and sport. With more than 130,000 residents from many communities, the county town of Suffolk is the fastest growing regional centre in the East of England. Home to University Campus Suffolk and Suffolk New College, the Regent Theatre and the Corn Exchange, Ipswich is a vibrant, thriving centre. Team Ipswich, promoting sport in the community ahead of the 2012 London Olympic Games, and the IP-City Network, a hi-tech business cluster for the wider Ipswich area, are also both based in Ipswich.

Continuous Backups Left Little Room for Error

Ipswich Borough Council's IT department decided to look at alternatives to tape when nightly backup times grew to 23 ½ hours a day.

"Operationally, it was quite complex to run our backups to tape, and our nightly backup jobs ran continuously. We dealt with tape jams or a failures at least once a week and often had to cancel backup jobs before they were completed so our data wasn't fully protected," said Howard Gaskin, IT infrastructure manager for the Ipswich Borough Council. "We decided to look to disk to improve our backup times and to reduce our reliance on tape."

Two-site ExaGrid System Fits into Existing Infrastructure, Improves Disaster Recovery

After looking at several different disk-based backup systems, Ipswich chose a two-site ExaGrid system to work alongside its existing backup application, Symantec's Backup Exec. One ExaGrid system was installed in Ipswich's main datacenter for primary backup, and data is replicated to the second ExaGrid system located three miles away in Ipswich's disaster recovery center.

"The ExaGrid system seemed like it was far less complex than some of the other systems we looked at, both in terms of installation and management. It has been running smoothly since the very beginning and our backups are now running flawlessly," said Gaskin.

Since installing the ExaGrid system, Council has been able to significantly reduce its backup times and its reliance on tape.

"Our backups are now completed well within our backup window, and we've been able to increase the number of times per day we backup our Exchange servers from once to twice a day," said Gaskin.

"Also, eliminating tape has made a huge impact on our day-to-day IT workload. We no longer have to manage and administer tape for those backups going to the ExaGrid and we've been able to reduce transportation and storage costs as well."

Data Deduplication Provides 61:1 Compression for VMware Images

Ipswich backs up a wide variety of data to the ExaGrid system, including SQL, file data, and VMware images. The Council backs up its VMware images directly to the ExaGrid system and has been receiving data deduplication rates as high as 61:1.

"We are expanding our use of VMware and it would have been a real challenge to put the images onto tape. ExaGrid's data deduplication technology does a fantastic job at compressing our VMware images, and our recovery times have really improved.

EXAGRID

We can recover a VMware server in about ten minutes. With tape, recovering the same VMware server would have taken half a day," said Gaskin.

Gaskin noted that restoring data from the ExaGrid is significantly faster than with tape.

"With tape, we had to retrieve the right tape from our offsite storage site, catalog it and read the file in. The whole process could take hours and hours. However, restoring data from the ExaGrid takes no time at all. It's far more efficient and it frees up our time to focus on more important things," said Gaskin.

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. ExaGrid is cost effective when a two-site system is used because its data deduplication technology moves only changes between sites, minimizing the amount of bandwidth needed.

Scalability to Grow Along with Budget and Needs, Responsive Customer Support

"One of the nice things about the ExaGrid system is its scalability. We had a defined problem with our backup window and the budget to address it, but we didn't want to buy a dead end solution. The ExaGrid system is inherently scalable and we can add more capacity as our budget allows and our needs grow," said Gaskin.

The ExaGrid system can easily be scaled to meet increased demand. 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 60TB 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.

ExaGrid's trained, in-house engineers provide dedicated support to individual accounts.All components are fully supported by ExaGrid's trained, in-house engineers dedicated to individual accounts. "We have had a very good experience with ExaGrid's customer support. We can always reach support via phone or email, regardless of the time," said Gaskin.

"We've been very happy with the ExaGrid system and it's worked as promised. Our backup jobs are now completed correctly each and every night and it has taken a lot of the hassle out of our backups."

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.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality SATA drives with byte-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's byte-level data deduplication technology stores only the changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk needed by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 or more, resulting in a solution that is 25 to 30% the cost of standard SATA drives. 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 servers can be used at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories for disaster recovery.

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

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