

Ahearn & Soper's Switch to ExaGrid Increases Backup Efficiency 'Tenfold'

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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William Rosenblath
IT Manager and Systems Engineer



Key Benefits:

- Ahearn & Soper establishes offsite replication to DR site with ExaGrid system
- Data deduplication increases retention of recovery points from two months to two years
- ExaGrid saves on time spent managing backups
- Restores reduced from hours to minutes
- ExaGrid stands behind its product and provides 'excellent' support when issues arise

Customer Overview

Since 1975, Ahearn & Soper Inc. has provided barcode software and hardware solutions that improve accuracy, tracking, and efficiency within distribution, manufacturing, and healthcare operations. The company is headquartered in Toronto, Ontario, and operates across North America from branch sales and service offices. Every total solution delivered by Ahearn & Soper includes consultation, project management, integration, customization, training, and after-sale service.

Establishing Disk-Based Backup and Offsite Replication

Ahearn & Soper had backed up its data to tape using Arcserve. As its tape system reached capacity, the company looked into switching to a disk-based backup system. One of the company's major considerations during its search for a new solution was establishing offsite replication for disaster recovery (DR). The company's IT Team at that time, which included Danny Di Marco, Lynn DeGuire, and William Rosenblath, had researched the backup market and found that ExaGrid had a good reputation, so they decided to set up a meeting with the ExaGrid sales team.

"ExaGrid came to our site and explained how the system worked and the benefits of its architecture. We were quite impressed with the product because of the self-contained nature of the system and how it handles deduplication and replication offsite," said William Rosenblath, IT manager and systems engineer at Ahearn & Soper.

The company installed ExaGrid systems at its primary site and its DR site, keeping Arcserve as its backup application. The ExaGrid system is easy to install and use and works seamlessly with all of the most frequently used backup applications, so an organization can retain its investment in existing applications and processes. In addition, ExaGrid appliances can be used at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories for disaster recovery.



Backup Efficiency Increased 'Tenfold'

Over the years, the company worked to virtualize its environment, and Rosenblath has been impressed with the results. "We've upgraded Arcserve twice since we installed our ExaGrid systems. Initially, Arcserve worked like a regular backup agent and backed up files and system information for restoration. Since we moved to ExaGrid, we've transitioned to a VMware system and virtualized our data center. We upgraded Arcserve to back up VMware, and now we're backing up system images instead of files. Our ExaGrid system deduplicates those images and replicates them offsite, so we have full system images that we can restore from. After improving our networking and our data center systems, the efficiency has gone up tenfold. We used to have a goal of just getting our daily incrementals done overnight, and now they're usually completed within an hour or two."



In addition to shorter backups, Rosenblath has found that restoring data is quicker, too. "We've had to restore files that have accidentally been deleted, and it's quicker to pick a file to restore from ExaGrid than it is to restore a snapshot and pull one file off of it. It doesn't take very long; I can usually assess what a person is looking for, find it, and restore it in under half an hour. The restoration itself only takes minutes. It was a much more time-consuming process with tape because I had to figure out which tape a file was on, load that tape, search the catalog to find the file, and then I could restore it. All of that would take two to three hours, but using ExaGrid has cut that down to minutes."

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 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, 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 disaster recovery.

Storage Maximized by Deduplication Extends Retention of Recovery Points

Rosenblath appreciates the benefits that data deduplication adds to the backup environment. "Deduplication has enabled us to retain more data and keep older recovery points—some that go back up to two years—where we could only store a few months' worth when we used a tape system."

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines enterprise SATA/SAS drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is far more cost effective than simply backing up to straight disk. ExaGrid's patented zone-level deduplication reduces the disk space needed by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 by storing only the unique bytes across backups instead of redundant data.

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.

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Assigned Customer Support Engineer Reduces Time to Resolution

Rosenblath has found that the ExaGrid system is easy to maintain, especially with the help of his assigned ExaGrid support engineer. "Switching to ExaGrid has saved us so much time on backup management. It's almost a 'set it and forget it' type of model, so all we need to do is monitor it and make sure that everything is working.

"Whenever we've had questions or issues, I've contacted ExaGrid support and they always work with us to resolve everything quickly. The ExaGrid system also sends out an email alert to let us know if there is a problem which triggers a call from our support engineer; sometimes we've gotten a call before we've even noticed a problem," said Rosenblath. "The fact that ExaGrid assigns engineers to individual accounts is a key feature for us. As technical specialists, one thing we dislike is being shuffled through multiple levels of support which increases time to resolution," he added.

ExaGrid Stands Behind Its Scalable System

Rosenblath worked with his ExaGrid support engineer to scale the existing ExaGrid systems. "Our data has doubled in size since we first installed our ExaGrid systems, so we purchased additional appliances. Our support engineer guided us through the installation of the new appliances from the upgrade process to transferring data to the new system.

"Last year, we had issues with upgrading our older appliance to the latest version of the firmware. We had two appliances at our DR site, but only one at our primary site and this was complicating the issue. ExaGrid swapped out the two appliances at the DR site for one appliance that matched our primary site appliance, at no cost to us. ExaGrid stands behind their product very well and provides excellent technical support when issues do arise," said Rosenblath.

ExaGrid and Arcserve Backup

Arcserve Backup delivers reliable, enterprise-class data protection across multiple hardware and software platforms. Its proven technology — unified by a single, easy-to-use interface — enables multi-tiered protection driven by business goals and policies. Organizations using popular backup applications can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid works with existing backup applications to provide faster and more reliable backups and restores.



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