

Beyond Nines Reduces Backup Times, Implements Seamless Disaster Recovery with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



"We had been burdened with non-scalable solutions in the past, so ExaGrid's GRID architecture was a big selling point."

Glen Kendell, CISSP
President, Hosting and Operations

Key Benefits:

- Backup window no longer overlaps into production hours, backup jobs "fly"
- Scalable architecture allows Beyond Nines to easily expand the system as data grows
- ExaGrid and Veeam together provide maximum restore performance and flexibility
- System alerts allow for easy monitoring of backups, usage, and capacity
- "Fantastic" customer support

Customer Overview

Beyond Nines works with nonprofit organizations to provide them with the knowledge, customization, and services that allow them to get more out of their technology investments. Beyond Nines' vision is to build and lead a global community of independent-thinking Blackbaud® software users who effect change and make a difference through the advancement of their causes. Beyond Nines was founded in 2010 in Seattle, Washington, and the company's consultants live and work around the country.

Need to Eliminate Backup Disruptions and Implement Offsite DR Solution

Beyond Nines needs to ensure that its customers are able to access data whenever and wherever they need it. However, as the company increased its customer base and the amount of data hosted, its backup infrastructure experienced challenges and longer backup times had the potential to disrupt operations during business hours.

"We had been backing up to five low-end NAS devices that were daisy-chained together just to get enough capacity to hold our data, but our backup window really suffered. Our backups were taking 12 to 15 hours to complete and began overlapping into production hours. We couldn't risk having our entire network freeze, with users unable to access their data," said Glen Kendell, president, hosting and operations at Beyond Nines. "We needed to select a more scalable solution capable of improving both backup times and our ability to recover from a disaster."

ExaGrid Provides Superior Scalability and Reliable Data Recovery

After approximately three months of research, Kendell decided on ExaGrid's disk-based backup solution with data deduplication over several other products, including EMC Data Domain, because of its superior scalability and ease of use.

"We had been burdened with non-scalable solutions in the past, so ExaGrid's GRID architecture was a big selling point," he said. "Also, we liked the fact that we could put a second system offsite and replicate data between the two systems for disaster recovery."

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, so when the system needs to expand, additional appliances are simply attached to the GRID. In addition to capacity, each appliance brings with it additional processing power, memory, and bandwidth. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all aspects of performance as the amount of data grows. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliance nodes are added to the GRID, the ExaGrid system automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

Beyond Nines purchased a two-site ExaGrid system and installed one in its primary datacenter in Dallas. The second system will soon be installed in its new disaster recovery site in Seattle, and data will be backed up automatically to the ExaGrid system in Dallas and then replicated nightly to Seattle.

Faster Restores, Improved Data Deduplication with ExaGrid and Veeam

Kendell said that Beyond Nines uses Veeam as its backup software, and any new solution selected needed to work seamlessly with it. ExaGrid was a perfect fit, he said, because the



two products not only work well together, but the combination also provides more restore flexibility.

Typically, Kendell explained, data can be restored using Veeam by overwriting it, which works well when the customer knows that the information is missing soon after it's deleted. However, when records are accidentally deleted or lost and it's not immediately noticed, overwriting isn't always the best approach. The ExaGrid-Veeam combination is powerful, Kendell said, because he can bring up a new virtual machine (VM) copy of a previous backup and load it onto ExaGrid's landing zone. Using Veeam's Instant VM recovery, Beyond Nines can provide its customer with access, enabling the customer to recover data from the VM and then unmount it without affecting the VM or disrupting the backup data.

"With the combination of ExaGrid and Veeam, we're able to provide faster, more granular recovery processes for our customers," Kendell said. "Also, ExaGrid's data deduplication enables us to reduce our backup data even further so we save disk space."

Although Beyond Nines uses Veeam's native data deduplication to reduce data before it hits the ExaGrid system, ExaGrid's post-process data deduplication reduces the data an additional 4.5:1.

Backups Run Ten Times Faster – Even with Twice the Data

Beyond Nines completed an infrastructure upgrade in conjunction with the ExaGrid installation, and since then, backup jobs that used to take 12 to 15 hours now take two to three hours, Kendall said, and replication is completed overnight.

"Our backup jobs absolutely fly now, and we're thrilled that our data is backed up and replicated offsite automatically each night," he said.

ExaGrid's the Right Solution for Beyond Nines

"There's really no management involved with the ExaGrid," said Kendell. "Once it's set up, it just runs. I receive daily emails

alerting me to the system's capacity level, and that really helps me monitor monthly usage and backup success rates."

Kendell is happy with Beyond Nines' choice of ExaGrid, and is especially pleased with the technical support he receives from the company.

"When the system was set up, our ExaGrid technical support engineer remotely walked me through the configuration process to ensure it was set up and optimized correctly," he said. "Our support engineer is also proactive and will call me if there's a new firmware version we need. He's been a huge help. The ExaGrid system has exceeded our expectations on all levels; however, the thing that really impressed me was the company's technical support structure. I've worked with lots of different companies and lots of different support structures, and never encountered one as good as ExaGrid's. I think it's fantastic!"

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 dedicated to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

ExaGrid and Veeam

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.

About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

Customers worldwide depend on ExaGrid Systems to solve their backup problems—effectively and permanently. ExaGrid's disk-based, scale-out GRID architecture adjusts to increasing backup demands due to constantly growing data volumes. It is the only solution that combines compute with capacity as well as a unique landing zone to permanently shorten backup windows and eliminate expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at www.exagrid.com.