ExaGrid System with Data Encryption Helps Medical Center Adhere to HIPAA Mandate

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

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Steve Arnold
System Administrator
CGH Medical Center

Key Benefits:

- Encryption provides improved security for data at rest
- ExaGrid offers flexibility for future changes in backup software
- Unlike competitive solutions, fast backups and effective deduplication provide superior efficiency
- Phone installation with an ExaGrid engineer is "very smooth"

Customer Overview

CGH Medical Center is a progressive acute care facility located in the Rock River Valley region of Northern Illinois, offering a broad range of inpatient and outpatient services.

High Volume of Tape Consumption, Long Backup Jobs

CGH Medical Center had been using a 60-slot tape library and going through a high volume of tape to back up and protect its data, but day-to-day tape management was a growing challenge for its IT staff, and long backup times made keeping up with backup jobs difficult.

"We had to swap out all the tapes twice a week and send them offsite to a vault, and dealing with that much tape was a challenge," said Steve Arnold, system administrator for CGH Medical Center. "The whole process was time consuming, from day-to-day tape management to restoring data from tapes held offsite. We also needed to improve the speed of our backups because some jobs were running as long as 24 hours."

ExaGrid System with Encryption Helps with HIPAA Compliance, Eliminates Need for Offsite Tape Storage

After looking at several solutions on the market, CGH Medical Center decided to install a two-site ExaGrid system. The hospital placed one system in its main datacenter, and is in the process of deploying a second system in an offsite clinic for data replication. The offsite system, an ExaGrid EX21000E with encryption, offers improved data security through its enterprise-proven, industry-standard Self-Encrypting Drive (SED) technology. SEDs provide a high level of security for data at rest and can help reduce IT drive retirement costs in the data center. All data on the disk drive is encrypted automatically without any action required by users. Encryption and authentication keys are never accessible to outside systems where they can be stolen. Unlike software-based encryption methods, SEDs typically have a better throughput rate, particularly during extensive read operations.

"We wanted data between sites to be encrypted, and the offsite ExaGrid system will enable us to meet regulatory requirements and eliminate tape. Once it's fully deployed we'll be completely tapeless and we won't have to deal with offsite tape storage in banks and vaults anymore," said Arnold. "Restores are easier now, too, because we don't have to deal with tape. All our information can be easily restored in minutes."

Flexibility, Superior Data Reduction, and Fast Backup Times

Today, CHG Medical Center uses the ExaGrid system in conjunction with HP Data Protector for the majority of its data and a SQL backup utility for SQL data. However, the system supports the most popular backup applications, so the facility can choose to implement different software if requirements change at any point in the future.

"Because the ExaGrid system is independent of the backup software, we can change backup solutions without touching our infrastructure. That gives us a lot of flexibility in the future to create an environment tailored specifically to our needs," Arnold said.

ExaGrid's data deduplication ensures efficient data reduction while delivering fast backup times.

"We looked at several different backup approaches, and we liked ExaGrid's approach to deduplication, which reduces the data and ensures that backup jobs run as quickly as possible," he said. "Some of the competitive products we looked at wouldn't have been as effective, either in terms of deduplication effectiveness or backup speed."

Easy Setup and Knowledgeable Customer Support

Arnold said that he racked the system up himself and then called into the customer support engineer assigned to CGH Medical Center's account to finish the installation.

"Installation was a very smooth process. The unit showed up and we mounted it in the rack. Then, our ExaGrid engineer guided me through the rest of the physical installation process, we went over the configuration, and the system was up and running," he said. "Having our support engineer by my side gave me a greater level of confidence."

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.

GRID Architecture Ensures Smooth Scalability

As the facility's data grows, the ExaGrid system will be able to easily scale to meet increased backup demands.

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, so when the system needs to expand, additional appliances are attached to the GRID, bringing with them not only additional disk but also processing power, memory, and bandwidth. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliances are added to the GRID, the ExaGrid automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

"We're confident that ExaGrid's GRID architecture will enable us to handle increased backup demands in the future," said Arnold. "The ExaGrid system has made our backups more efficient and its encryption feature will enable us securely replicate data between sites and eliminate tape – saving us a tremendous amount of time and the hassle of managing tape and performing restores."

ExaGrid and HP Data Protector

The ExaGrid system supports cost-effective and scalable disk-based backup using HP Data Protector backup software. ExaGrid also supports the ability to replicate HP Data Protector backups to a second site for offsite disaster recovery protection.

Intelligent Data Protection ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality disk 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 zone-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 backing up to straight disk. 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 appliances can be used at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories for disaster recovery.

About ExaGrid Systems, Inc.

ExaGrid provides backup storage with a unique landing zone and scale-out architecture. The landing zone provides for the fastest backups, restores and instant VM recoveries. The scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable GRID and provides for a fixed-length backup window as data grows, eliminating expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at **www.exagrid.com**.

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