South African BCM Services Provider, ContinuitySA, Secures Client Data Using ExaGrid

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>
> **Bradley Janse van Rensburg**
> **Chief Technology Officer**

SOUTH AFRICA

Key Benefits:

- ContinuitySA offers its clients backup and recovery services with ExaGrid as its standard go-to-market strategy
- Switching to ExaGrid reduced one client's incremental backup from two days to one hour
- Despite ransomware attacks, clients haven't had any data loss due to secure backups
- ContinuitySA easily scales clients' ExaGrid systems to accommodate their data growth
- Many of ContinuitySA's clients with long-term retention use an ExaGrid-Veeam solution due to its superior deduplication

Customer Overview

ContinuitySA is Africa's leading provider of business continuity management (BCM) and resilience services to public and private organisations. Delivered by highly skilled experts, its fully managed services include Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resilience, enterprise risk management, work area recovery, and BCM advisory – all designed to enhance business resilience in an age of escalating threat.

ExaGrid Becomes the Go-to-Market Strategy

ContinuitySA offers many services to its clients to protect their businesses from disaster and ensure operation without interruption, in particular, data backup and disaster recovery services. Many of its clients had been using tape-based backup, and ContinuitySA itself had offered a popular purpose-built appliance for backing up data, but due to a variety of factors, the company decided to look into a new solution to recommend to its clients. "The solution we had been using wasn't very scalable and could be difficult to manage at times," said Ashton Lazarus, cloud technical specialist at ContinuitySA.

"We evaluated a number of virtualized backup solutions but weren't able to find one that offered the level of price-performance that would meet our clients' requirements," said Bradley Janse van Rensburg, chief technology officer at ContinuitySA. "ExaGrid was introduced to us by a business partner. We asked for a demo of the ExaGrid system and were very impressed with its backup and restore performance, and data deduplication efficiency. We like that ExaGrid scales quite efficiently and that there are encrypted versions of its appliances at attractive price points. We converted from other technology to ExaGrid and we're happy with the results. We've made it our standard offering and standard go-to-market strategy."

Growing Clientele Using ExaGrid to Back Up Data

Currently, five of ContinuitySA's clients use ExaGrid to back up data, and this list of companies has been growing steadily.

"Initially, we worked with financial services companies, and they still make up a large part of our business. We have grown our customer base to provide services across a number of industries, including large government departments and local operations for multinational companies. The clients that are using ExaGrid have been with us for a number of years and are very happy with the performance of their backups," said Janse van Rensburg.

"We offer fully-managed solutions for our clients to protect their environment. Using ExaGrid is instrumental in our offerings of backup-as-a-service and disaster-recovery-as-a-service. We make sure that all the backups and replications are going through successfully, and we manage their connectivity and recovery infrastructure. We regularly test data recovery for clients so if they do have a business interruption, we can recover the data on their behalf. We also offer cyber security, advisory services, and work area recovery where a client can relocate to our offices and operate from their new systems as well as the recovery infrastructure that comes with those services."

EXAGRID®

ExaGrid and Veeam: The Strategic Solution for Virtual Environments

ContinuitySA's clients use a variety of backup applications; however, one of them stands out for virtual environments. "Over 90% of the workloads that we protect are virtual, so our main strategy is to use Veeam to back up to ExaGrid," said Janse van Rensburg. "When we were looking into the ExaGrid technology, we saw how closely it integrates with Veeam, and how we could manage it from the Veeam console, which makes backup and recovery efficient.

"The ExaGrid-Veeam solution allows us to ensure that we have long-term retention for our clients through its deduplication capabilities. Its reliability and consistency are very important to us, so that we can quickly recover data if a client has an outage," said Janse van Rensburg. "The combined ExaGrid-Veeam deduplication has helped maximize storage for our clients, allowing us to add more restore points and our clients to expand their archiving policies. Our clients who had been using tape have noticed a major impact by adding data deduplication to the backup environment. One of our clients had been storing their data on 250TB worth of tape and now they are storing the same data on only 20TB," added Lazarus.

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.

Backup Windows and Data Restores Reduced from Days to Hours

The backup and recovery engineering staff at ContinuitySA have noticed that switching to ExaGrid has improved the backup process, especially in terms of backup windows, and also the time needed to restore client data. "It used to take up to two days to run an incremental backup of a Microsoft Exchange server for one of our clients. An incremental of that same server now takes one hour! Restoring data is also much faster now that we use ExaGrid and Veeam. Restoring an Exchange server would take up to four days, but now we are able to restore an Exchange server in four hours!" said Lazarus.

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**.

ContinuitySA is confident in the security that ExaGrid uses to protect the data stored on its systems. "ExaGrid offers peace of mind that data is available to access whenever a client needs it, and that it will remain easily accessible for the foreseeable future," said Janse van Rensburg. "There have been several ransomware attacks on client data, but our backups have been safe and uncrackable. We have always been able to restore our clients and save them from complete data loss or the need to pay ransomware funds. We have had zero data loss while using ExaGrid."

ExaGrid is the only deduplication appliance that writes backups directly to a disk landing zone, avoids inline deduplication to increase backup performance, and stores the most recent copy in an undeduplicated form for fast restores and VM boots. "Adaptive" deduplication performs data 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.

ExaGrid's Support and Scalability Help ContinuitySA Manage Client Systems

ContinuitySA is confident in using ExaGrid for its clients' data, in part due to ExaGrid's unique scale-out architecture that – unlike competing solutions – adds compute with capacity, which keeps the backup window fixed in length even as data grows. "One of our clients recently added an ExaGrid appliance to their system, because their data was growing and they also wished to expand their retention. The ExaGrid sales engineer helped us size the system to make sure it was the right appliance for the client's environment, and our ExaGrid support engineer helped to configure the new appliance to the existing system," said Lazarus.

Lazarus has been impressed with the prompt assistance he receives from his ExaGrid support engineer. "ExaGrid support is always available to help, so I don't have to wait hours or days for a response back. My support engineer always follows up to make sure that whatever we have worked on is still going well afterward. He's helped us work through issues, like the time we lost power to an appliance while we were upgrading the version of ExaGrid we use, and he walked me through a bare metal installation, step-by-step, so we didn't have to struggle through the process. He has also been great with quickly shipping out new hardware parts when needed. ExaGrid support provides great customer service."