

Gates Chili School District Learns to Streamline Backups

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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– Phil Jay
Gates Chili Central School
District

Customer Overview

Gates Chili Central School District serves the towns of Gates and Chili, New York, covering a 26 square mile area in a community situated between Lake Ontario and the Finger Lakes. Gates Chili has approximately 5500 students, and operates seven schools, including five elementary buildings for grades K-5, a middle school for grades 6-8, and a high school for grades 9-12.

The IT staff at Gates Chili is responsible for managing the technology needs of the District, and wanted to ensure that the student, teacher, and administrative data was backed up effectively. The staff was overwhelmed by the data backup processes in place across the 9 buildings in the district. Each day, the district's nearly 30 servers were backed up individually with tape drives. Ideally, after the backups were completed, administrative personnel in each building would eject the tapes and store them, then set up new tapes to backup data for the day.

"It was hard to manage the tapes because it was difficult to get so many people to take ownership of the process. We would expect that the tapes would come into a central location and they wouldn't make it there, and then the new tapes wouldn't get back out to them for upcoming backups. We really were just taking our chances," said Phil Jay, manager of IT operations for Gates Chili.

Budget Lesson

School budgets are notoriously tight, and Gates Chili is no exception. Although the backup system in place was cumbersome, budget restraints prevented them from upgrading to a more centralized system.

"We had been talking about moving towards a disk backup solution for three or four years but the cost was simply prohibitive," said Jay. "If you put a computer in a classroom, the staff and the general public can see their tax dollars at work. With a disk-based backup system, it's behind the

scenes and the value isn't as apparent." In fact, the quote for a SATA-based disk backup system was approximately \$100,000.

"Cost is always a major factor for purchases in a school district," said Jay. "The cost of the ExaGrid system was significantly less than the straight SATA solution, and ExaGrid was a great fit."

Gates Chili was also able to further its cost savings because ExaGrid acts as a disk-based target for its existing Symantec Backup Exec system. Additionally, because ExaGrid combines high quality SATA with unique byte-level delta data reduction technology, the total amount of data stored was drastically reduced, which significantly reduced the overall cost of the system.

Today, Gates Chili has approximately half of their servers backing up to ExaGrid, with the rest scheduled to be online shortly.

Shrinking backup window

Gates Chili has seen its backup windows reduce dramatically. Prior to installing ExaGrid, individual backups would take from 45 minutes for a standard server to eight to nine hours for backups in the art and technology departments. "We were maxing out tapes at certain points, and we'd have to make the decision to strip out some of the data just to complete the backup," said Jay.

Jay estimates that with ExaGrid, all backups, including the art department, are now taking a total of two to three hours to

complete. Additionally, since backups are automatic, the IT department no longer has to rely on a network of people to handle the tapes.

Fast restores

In a learning environment, mistakes happen and files need to be restored quickly. "Our restores seem to go in waves," said Jay. "We can go for a while when we won't need to perform a restore, but then a student accidentally deletes a file, and we'll go through a period where we'll have 6 or 8 incidents within a couple of days." Sometimes the file can be recovered off the server, but ExaGrid's fast data recovery provides fast restores where restoring from tape was a time consuming and cumbersome process.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality SATA drives with byte-level delta data reduction, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's delta data reduction technology stores only the changes from backup to backup

instead of storing full file copies, reducing the amount of disk space needed to at least 20 to 1, and resulting in a solution that is 25% the cost of standard SATA drives.

ExaGrid is easy to install and use, and works seamlessly with popular backup applications, enabling organizations to retain their investment in existing applications.

ExaGrid can be used at a primary site and at a second site to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with a live data repository or for disaster recovery. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's byte-level delta technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Because Gates Chili runs a lean operation with a number of servers in different locations, Jay appreciates ExaGrid's ease of use. "The backups are fast and it's easy to use. Once ExaGrid is installed and configured, you don't have to touch it," said Jay.

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

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.