



ExaGrid Supports Lee County Tax Collector's Evolving Backup Environment for a Decade and Beyond

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Eddie Wilson
ITS Manager

Key Benefits:

- ExaGrid has provided high-quality performance and easy management for many years
- ExaGrid supports Office's new hyperconverged environment including Nutanix and HYCU as well as existing backup apps
- The Office easily scaled out ExaGrid systems as data grew
- The Office installed ExaGrid SEC models, enhancing data security

Customer Overview

Lee County makes up the entirety of the Cape Coral/Fort Meyers, Florida area and is the most populous county in Southwest Florida. The Lee County Tax Collector's Office is authorized by Florida's Constitution as a separate entity from other county departments and agencies. The Tax Collector serves as an agent for various state and local government agencies for the collection and distribution of revenues. It is the responsibility of the Tax Collector to invest these revenues and funds, pending their timely distribution, to various state and local agencies, and taxing authorities.

ExaGrid Offers Best Approach to Deduplication

The IT staff at the Lee County Tax Collector's Office have been using an ExaGrid system for about a decade. Initially, they had purchased ExaGrid to replace tape. "We looked carefully at our backup requirements and decided to look for a disk-based solution that would let us reduce or eliminate tape, improve our backup windows, and enable us to replicate data to a second system for disaster recovery," said Eddie Wilson, ITS Manager at the Lee County Tax Collector's Office.

"We researched the different types of data deduplication that various backup solutions provide, such as Dell EMC Data Domain and Quantum systems, and found that ExaGrid's Adaptive Deduplication process was the best approach due the fact that deduplication is performed after the backup lands on the system," said Wilson. "During our search, the ExaGrid system was the clear winner. The price and performance were great and it fit right into our existing environment. We were also able to deploy a two-site system that enables us to replicate data to our disaster recovery site."

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 (DR) 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 DR.

ExaGrid Supports Evolving Hyperconverged Environment

Over the years, the Lee County Tax Collector's Office data has grown, and the IT staff have evolved the backup environment. Initially, the staff used Veritas Backup Exec as well as Quest vRanger to back up its data to the ExaGrid system. As technology has advanced, the IT staff has added newer systems and approaches to the environment. One major change has been to phase out VMware and the older Dell EqualLogic Storage it worked with for primary storage, and replace it with a hyperconverged Nutanix solution.

Nutanix converges storage, CPU, and networking, making data center infrastructure invisible, and enabling IT staff to focus on applications and services that power the organization while providing the highest user performance and integrated management. The Office also installed HYCU, a backup application supported by ExaGrid to provide the fastest backups, fastest restores, best scalability for Nutanix environments.



"We love using Nutanix," said Wilson. "A hyperconverged environment is much easier to use, and it saves on cost. The HYCU software is able to back up the actual VM images of all the VMs on Nutanix now, allowing us to either restore an entire VM or individual files stored on ExaGrid, using the HYCU software."

Wilson is still backing up a small number of VMs to ExaGrid with vRanger while the transition takes place, and still backs up SQL data to ExaGrid using Backup Exec. He has been impressed with ExaGrid's ability to support the Office's different backup apps and processes. "We've always been able to back up data to ExaGrid with any of the backup software that we've had available. They are all easily integrated with the ExaGrid system, which has been wonderful."

ExaGrid Keeps Backup and Replication on Schedule

From the start, the IT staff at the Office noticed the impact that ExaGrid has on backup performance. "Our backup times are significantly faster than our previous solution, and I love the fact that our data is automatically replicated in case we need it for recovery purposes," said Ron Joray, Assistant ITS Manager at the Lee County Tax Collector's Office.

There are many types of data backed up to the ExaGrid system from different sources, and ExaGrid keeps the different backup jobs on schedule. "We stagger backup jobs from the different backup applications to our ExaGrid system over a five-hour backup window. We are in the process of refreshing our network, and also planning to add a 10-gig connection to our ExaGrid system, and we're expecting once it's all finished, our backups will just scream and take no time at all," said Wilson.

Scalable ExaGrid System Enhances Data Security and Retention

Over the years, the Office added more appliances to its ExaGrid systems to keep up with data growth. "Scalability was an important factor in choosing the ExaGrid system. We're constantly generating more and more data and adding additional servers. The first ExaGrid model we purchased was an ExaGrid EX5000 and it offered us the storage capacity we needed at the time, but we were glad that when we needed to expand we could simply add a new appliance to gain more capacity," said Wilson.

About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides intelligent hyperconverged storage 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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The IT staff have recently refreshed the backup environment, consolidating the ExaGrid systems to larger-capacity EX21000E-SEC models at both the Office's primary site and DR site. "The whole process went very smoothly. Our ExaGrid support engineer helped us migrate data onto our new appliances so that we could decommission the older ones and reassign the IP addresses we wanted to use. Our support engineer helped us configure the systems and we were able to get everything done in the timeframe we had hoped to," said Wilson.

The ExaGrid system can easily scale to accommodate data growth. ExaGrid's computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, appliances of any size or age can be mixed and matched in a single system with capacities of up to a 2PB full backup plus retention and an ingest rate of up to 432TB per hour. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

"Installing these new appliances has been a great improvement, as they are the SEC models, so now our backups are encrypted and more secure. We have a much larger storage capacity now, with 49% of our retention space free for future growth. We are currently keeping our daily backups as well as five weekly backups and four monthly backups from each of the different backup applications stored on our ExaGrid systems, with room to spare," said Wilson.

The data security capabilities in the ExaGrid product line, including optional enterprise-class Self-Encrypting Drive (SED) technology, provide a high level of security for data at rest and can help reduce IT drive retirement costs in the data center. Encryption and authentication keys are never accessible to outside systems where they can be stolen. ExaGrid's SED technology provides automatic data-encryption-at-rest for ExaGrid models EX7000 and above.

System Easy to Manage with 'Great Support'

"We've had a great experience with ExaGrid's customer support. We have our support engineer's direct number and can call or email him any time we have a question or issue," said Joray.

"ExaGrid's GUI is easy to navigate, and we're able to monitor our systems through the daily alerts. We really don't have to do much at all to manage it, it works the way we want it to work," said Wilson. "We know our data is always protected and available when we need it."



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