

North Kingstown School Department Earns an “A” for Better Backups with ExaGrid

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



“The ExaGrid system gives us a great deal of flexibility. Not only can it grow in terms of capacity, but we can also add a second ExaGrid system at some point in the future to replicate data to another location and completely eliminate tape.”

Richard Booth
Network Manager
North Kingstown Schools

Customer Overview

The North Kingstown school department is a K-12 school district serving North Kingstown, Rhode Island. With eight schools and an administration building, the school district educates over 4,400 students each year.

Long Backups Force IT Department to Hit the Books in Search of a New Solution

The North Kingstown school department has nearly 5,000 student, faculty and user accounts on its network. The school department centralizes most of its data and performs full backups each Monday and incremental backups throughout the rest of the week. Each weekend, the IT department backs up data from different schools throughout the district. However, the school department had outgrown its tape library and backups often took 30 hours or more, resulting network slowdowns and sliding backup windows.

“We simply outgrew the capacity of our tape library and we constantly had to feed it tapes just to complete nightly backups,” said Richard Booth, Network Manager at the North Kingstown School Department. “We knew we needed a new solution and began looking around at alternatives.”

Initially, the school department considered building its own storage area network.

“Backing up to disk would have helped, but we would have been backing up the same data over and over again without data de-duplication,” said Booth. “We learned about ExaGrid and really liked its data de-duplication technology because it only saves the changes from backup to backup. It just made so much sense.”

ExaGrid System Provides Data De-duplication, Works with Existing Backup Application and Tape Library

The North Kingstown school department chose the ExaGrid system and installed it

in its main datacenter. The ExaGrid system works with the school department’s existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec™.

Tape copies from the ExaGrid system are also made on a monthly basis using the department’s existing tape library for offsite DR purposes.

“We were able to leverage both our existing backup application and our tape library, which not only helped out in terms of cost but also in terms of our learning curve,” said Booth. “The ExaGrid was also easy to set up, and I barely needed to look at the manual to install it. I simply plugged it into the network, stepped through a few configuration screens and it was up and running with Backup Exec. Then, I just pointed the shares to the ExaGrid instead of the tape library and it was done. All in all, setting up the ExaGrid took about 20 minutes.”

Since installing the ExaGrid system, the school department has upgraded its network and is now seeing its backups completed in just a few hours.

“Our backups are now running very quickly and are completed well within our backup windows,” said Booth. “We’ve also been very happy with ExaGrid’s data de-duplication capabilities. It’s extremely effective at reducing our data and it enables us to maximize the amount of data we keep on the system. It’s really amazing,” said Booth.

ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with data de-duplication, which stores changes from backup to backup instead of storing full file copies. This unique approach reduces the disk space required by a range of 10:1 to 50:1 or more, delivering unparalleled cost savings and performance.

EXAGRID™

ExaGrid delivers extremely fast backup performance because data is written directly to disk, and data de-duplication is performed post-process after the data is stored to reduce data. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Scalability to Add Capacity, Flexibility to Add Disaster Recovery Site

For Booth, scalability was also an important factor in choosing ExaGrid. ExaGrid's GRID computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, different sized configurations can be mixed and matched into a single GRID system with capacities of up to 60TB. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

"The ExaGrid system gives us a great deal of flexibility. Not only can it grow in terms of capacity, but we can also add a second ExaGrid system at some point in the future to replicate data to another location and completely eliminate tape," said Booth.

Outstanding Customer Support

"We've been surprised at the high level of support we get from ExaGrid. Our support person is a Backup Exec guru and has been instrumental in helping us streamline our backup processes and to make sure that everything is configured and tuned correctly. For example, one of our remote schools is Apple™-based. We initially had difficulty getting Backup Exec to work with the Macs, but our support person worked through the problem and resolved it even though it wasn't an ExaGrid issue," said Booth. "It's been a very positive experience. Typically, you expect a support person to sort of go through the motions but our ExaGrid engineer has the ability to remote into our system and the knowledge to solve any problem that comes up."

ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support team is staffed by trained, in-house engineers who are dedicated to individual accounts. The ExaGrid system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components. Booth estimates that he had been spending five hours per week managing tape. With the ExaGrid system, he now spends 30 minutes.

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.

"Once a week I check the ExaGrid system to make sure everything is running smoothly," said Booth. "Our backups are all automated with the ExaGrid and we've reduced our reliance on tape tremendously. Just knowing that our backups are completed flawlessly every night is a wonderful thing."

ExaGrid and Symantec Backup Exec

Symantec Backup Exec provides cost-effective, high-performance, and certified disk-to-disk-to-tape backup and recovery – including continuous data protection for Microsoft Exchange, SQL, file servers, and workstations. High-performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection and scalable management of local and remote server backups.

Organizations using Symantec Backup Exec can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Symantec Backup Exec, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Symantec Backup Exec, using ExaGrid in place of a tape backup system is as easy as pointing existing backup jobs at a NAS share on the ExaGrid system. Backup jobs are sent directly from the backup application to the ExaGrid for onsite backup to disk.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality SATA drives with byte-level data de-duplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's byte-level data de-duplication 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 standard SATA drives. 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 servers can be used at primary sites and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories for disaster recovery.

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