Pepe & Hazard Moves to ExaGrid to Make Backups and Restores Faster and More Efficient
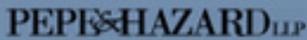
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>
> **Brian Ciarcia**
> **IT Manager**
> **Pepe & Hazard**

Customer Overview

Founded in 1983, Pepe & Hazard LLP is a law firm specializing in the areas of business and finance, litigation and construction. Based in Hartford Connecticut, the firm has offices in Southport and Waterbury, Connecticut and Boston, Massachusetts.

Move to Virtualization Causes Backup and Recovery Concerns

For months, Brian Ciarcia and the IT staff at Pepe & Hazard had been considering moving to disk-based backup to ease the daily grind of dealing with tape, long backup windows and difficult restore processes. When the firm decided to move to VMware to virtualize many of its servers, the IT staff decided that the time was right to upgrade its backup system.

"We were at the point where we needed to upgrade the tape drives in each of our offices but we were tired of manually dealing with tape, long backup windows and lengthy restore processes," said Brian Ciarcia, IT Manager at Pepe & Hazard. "We began looking more seriously at disk-to-disk solutions when we started to implement VMware. In particular, we needed a solution that would ease our file recovery process in case one of our virtual servers crashed."

Two-site ExaGrid System Provides Primary Backup and Data Replication

After looking at several different disk-based backup options, Pepe & Hazard purchased a two-site ExaGrid system to provide both primary backup and data replication for disaster recovery. The primary ExaGrid system is located in the firm's Hartford office and backs up all of the firm's data. Data from the primary ExaGrid system will be replicated to a second ExaGrid system installed in a co-location facility in New York. The ExaGrid system works with firm's existing backup application, Symantec's Backup Exec.

"The ExaGrid system provided exactly what we needed at a better price point than competitive products. It really is a more cost-effective way for our organization to do backups, especially considering the cost of new tape drives, the ongoing cost of tape, and the staff time required to manage tape on a daily basis," said Ciarcia.

ExaGrid's integration with VMware also played an important part in the decision. "We looked at several different disk-based backup systems in depth and we liked the tight integration between the ExaGrid and VMware and the fact that ExaGrid provides a high level of support for VMware," said Ciarcia. "The ExaGrid system will enable us to have near-instantaneous recovery of our virtual hosts in the event of a crash." Ciarcia performed a considerable amount of due diligence on the ExaGrid system before deciding on the purchase, especially in the area of data de-duplication.

"We did a lot of research on ExaGrid's data de-duplication technology and talked with several users about their experiences. Each and every customer raved about ExaGrid's data compression numbers but we truly didn't believe how effective it could be until we installed it ourselves," said Ciarcia. "We've been amazed at how well the data de-duplication works. In fact, our backup data now takes up less than half the size of our message store. ExaGrid's ability to break up the data into smaller pieces also reduces transmission time between sites and the amount of bandwidth needed to replicate data."

EXAGRID™

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 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.

Backup Times Reduced, Eliminating Tape Saves 18-22 Hours of Staff Time Per Week

Pepe & Hazard has been able to significantly reduce its backup windows since installing the ExaGrid system.

For example, the firm has been able to reduce backups of its Exchange server from nearly 12 hours with tape to less than four hours with ExaGrid. However, Ciarcia said that the biggest time saver is in the reduction of hours he spends on weekly tape management.

"With tape, backing up our data was really a full time job because managing tape was such a nightmare. We often found that our tapes were corrupt when we went to restore information from them so we made it a point to test our data several times a week. All in all, I was spending 18 to 22 hours per week managing and administering tape," said Ciarcia. "Now, we are completely tapeless and I am able to spend the time I used to spend on tape in more productive ways."

As a law firm, the ability to maintain stringent retention policies is critical. Because the Pepe & Hazard needed to ensure that its backup system could handle additional data in the future, it was important that its system be scalable. "We're already thinking about expanding our ExaGrid to add more retention. ExaGrid's GRID architecture is inherently scalable and will enable us to grow the system easily to accommodate more data or extend our retention," said Ciarcia.

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 a 60TB full backup plus retention. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, and load balancing of all data across servers is automatic.

Customer Support Helps Smooth Transition

"We've been very impressed at the high level of customer support we receive from ExaGrid. We have our own dedicated support engineer who helped us get the system up and running. He understands our environment and has made good recommendations in terms of how we can improve the performance of our system and make our backup processes easier," said Ciarcia.

ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support center 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.

"Installing the ExaGrid system has made a tremendous difference in our daily backup procedures and we're now more confident in our ability to restore data.

Also, it has really freed up staff time because our backups are now completely tapeless and take far less effort than before," said Ciarcia.

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 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.

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