St. Mary's Health Center Cures Backup Issues with ExaGrid

SSMHealth.

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>
> **Sherrill Hackett**
> **Lead Technical Analyst**

Key Benefits:

- Nightly backups 4x faster after switch to ExaGrid

- ExaGrid provides return on investment; 'pays for itself' in less than a year

- Deduplication allows hospital to double its data retention

- Two-site configuration gives IT staff confidence that data is well-protected

- ExaGrid provides 'extremely high level' of customer support

Customer Overview

St. Mary's Health Center is a 167-bed, full-service hospital located in Jefferson City, Missouri. St. Mary's provides a range of services, including extensive cardiology and open-heart surgery, a nationally-accredited chest pain center, a wound healing center, a nationally- certified sleep diagnostic center, a maternal and child-care center, an oncology center, and a network of primary-care clinics.

Long Backup Times Led to Network Slowdowns

The IT staff at St. Mary's Health Center could barely keep up with the facility's nightly backup schedule using tape. Backups began each night at 5:30 p.m. and wouldn't finish until 3:00 p.m. the next afternoon, causing the St. Mary's network to slow and affecting productivity.

"We had clearly outgrown the capabilities of our tape libraries and were running backup jobs nearly continuously," said Sherill Hackett, lead technical analyst at St. Mary's. "The long backups were beginning to affect our network performance and as a healthcare facility, that's simply unacceptable."

The IT staff at St. Mary's decided that the time was right to revisit the facility's backup strategies and looked at both disk and tape. After evaluating systems from ExaGrid, as well as other companies, the facility chose a disk-based backup solution from ExaGrid. St. Mary's installed one ExaGrid system in its datacenter and a second system offsite for data replication. The ExaGrid system works in conjunction with the facility's existing backup application, Veritas Backup Exec.

"The ExaGrid system was cost-effective to acquire and it has enabled us to significantly reduce the amount of money we spend on tape, transportation and offsite storage fees. In fact, we've been able to virtually eliminate tape," said Hackett. "The ExaGrid system gave us a better return on investment than all of the other solutions we looked at. We had estimated that the ExaGrid would pay for

itself within a year but it will probably be less than a year because it is performing even better than we anticipated."

Nightly Backup Times Reduced from 20 hours to Five Hours, Data Deduplication Technology Exceeds Expectations

Since installing the ExaGrid system, St. Mary's has been able to reduce its backup times considerably. Nightly backups, which had been taking 20 hours now begin at 7:00 p.m. and are completed by midnight. Weekly full backups are now performed each weekend and are completed in less than 20 hours.

When St. Mary's purchased the ExaGrid system, the IT staff sized the system to accommodate three months of data, however the facility has been able to store six months of data on the system because its data deduplication technology has exceeded expectations.

"We like the fact that the ExaGrid deduplicates our data after it lands on the system so that the backups run as quickly as

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possible. ExaGrid's data deduplication technology is extremely effective at reducing our data and we've been able to retain twice the amount of data than we had planned to," said Hackett. "The data deduplication technology also makes the transmission between sites fast and efficient because it only moves changes across the network."

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 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.

"We have a much higher level of confidence in our backups now that we have the two-site ExaGrid system. The level of data integrity we have with the ExaGrid systems is just so much higher that it was with tapes," said Hackett. "We have also been able to increase the productivity of our IT staff since moving our backups to ExaGrid. We had been spending countless hours troubleshooting backups and dealing with tape.

The ExaGrid has comprehensive monitoring capabilities and we are notified if there are any issues with our backups. It's a tremendous time saver." Hackett reports that restores are also much faster.

"Restoring data is much easier with the ExaGrid system. We no longer have to go offsite and pull a tape, and it's much faster to restore data from disk than it was from tape," she said.

Modular Architecture Provides Easy Scalability

"One of the key reasons we chose the ExaGrid system was that it was modular. Our data has historically grown very quickly and we needed a system that could easily expand to meet our needs into the future," said Hackett. "As our data grows, we can not only increase the disk space, but also increase memory and everything else with it."

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

Superior Customer Support

"We have received an extremely high level of support from ExaGrid. The ExaGrid sales team was spot-on in terms of their technical knowledge about the product, and the post- sales support has been phenomenal," said Hackett. "Our support engineer has gone well beyond just servicing the ExaGrid product. He has worked with us to make sure that our overall backup experience is as economical and streamlined as possible." The ExaGrid system was designed to be easy to set up and maintain, and ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support team is staffed by trained, in-house level 2 engineers who are assigned to individual accounts. The system is fully supported, and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

"Since moving our backups to ExaGrid, we've been able to really reduce our backup windows and restore times and we're far more confident with data protection capabilities," said Hackett. "The system has saved us countless hours in managing backups and a considerable amount of money in tape, transportation and storage costs. We've been extremely happy with the system," said Hackett.

ExaGrid and Veritas Backup Exec

Veritas Backup Exec provides cost-effective, high-performance, and certified disk-to-disk-to-tape backup and recovery – including continuous data protection for Microsoft Exchange servers, Microsoft SQL servers, 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 Veritas Backup Exec can look to ExaGrid as an alternative to tape for nightly backups. ExaGrid sits behind existing backup applications, such as Veritas Backup Exec, providing faster and more reliable backups and restores. In a network running Veritas 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 backup to disk.

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**.