

University Saves Time, Increases Disaster Protection and Gains Scalability by Dumping Tape

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY



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Seth Bokelman
Sr. Systems Administrator
Univ. of Northern Iowa

Customer Overview

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) is a state-supported university of approximately 13,000 students, located in Northeast Iowa in the metro Cedar Falls/Waterloo area. UNI is ranked among the nation's top 650 undergraduate colleges and universities in the Forbes' 2011 annual ranking of top colleges.

Customer Environment

The IT staff at University of Northern Iowa (UNI) had been using onsite tape for data backup as a chargeback service to the University system for years using a large LTO tape library. They backed up data files, Oracle RMAN backups and Microsoft SQL backups for their clients using Symantec NetBackup, with an average of three months' retention and the ability to restore the last 30 daily backups.

In order to offer advanced services to their clients, UNI IT wanted to be able to replicate data offsite for increased data protection. They also wanted to be able to send data offsite more frequently for improved business continuity. The UNI IT staff decided that a move to disk backup with data deduplication would be the best solution for them based on their backup objectives.

ExaGrid Advantages over Data Domain and Symantec Appliances

UNI IT evaluated appliances from Symantec, ExaGrid and Data Domain. According to Seth Bokelman, senior systems administrator at UNI, "We looked at Data Domain first and got a quote from them but had sticker shock; it was not even a remote possibility that we were going to spend that kind of money. We looked at Symantec's NetBackup appliances and brought them both in for testing. In the end, we decided to go with ExaGrid largely because of the pricing and the need to support backups using Oracle RMAN."

One of the big advantages of moving to an ExaGrid system was that UNI would be able to keep their existing NetBackup software, which they liked very much, for backing up files. Transitioning to a different backup software package wouldn't meet their needs and might not have some of the features they were used to. According to Bokelman, "We wanted to keep the same backup software that we'd been used to. Symantec NetBackup is very easy to work with. I also liked ExaGrid's scalability because of our 42% annual data growth rate. We see typically 40-50% data growth each year."

UNI Improves Disaster Readiness, Saves Time and Effort Ditching Tape

UNI partnered with another of the state Universities in Iowa to locate an ExaGrid in their datacenter, 90 miles away, and used existing network connectivity between the two sites to offsite their backups every day, whereas previously they were only able to do them weekly using tapes.

UNI IT has seen positive results from ditching tape in favor of ExaGrid appliances. "We've saved a lot of time by not having to manually send tapes offsite anymore," said Bokelman. "We also shortened backup windows by no longer being limited by the number of tape drives we had as to how many different servers could back up at once. ExaGrid has also allowed us to actually increase the distance between our offsite copies and our primary datacenters while reducing the amount of effort that

went into getting the data there. In the past, our backup systems were limited in their speed by the ability of the client to output data. With ExaGrid, we are able to run more backups simultaneously. This has resulted in backups as a whole getting done faster," he said.

As for the impact on Bokelman personally, he added "ExaGrid has made my job easier as there's simply less 'care and feeding' required compared to my tape libraries. I've also been able to get out of the middle of our database backups, as the DBAs can write directly to the ExaGrid appliance. Compared to tape, ExaGrid saves me time because I don't have to constantly monitor the system to make sure I have enough free tape, and I don't have to come in on the weekend to swap out a tape drive when it goes down or gets dirty. Without tape, I don't have to worry about the pressure of being there when the backup tape fails."

Data Deduplication Reduces Amount of Data Stored, Speeds Transmission Between Sites

ExaGrid combines last backup compression along with data deduplication, 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 deduplication 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 zone level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Intelligent Data Protection

ExaGrid's turnkey disk-based backup system combines high quality SATA drives with zone-level data deduplication, delivering a disk-based solution that is more cost effective than standard SATA drives. ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication 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.

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.