

The Salvation Army Improves Backup Times and Eliminates Tape with ExaGrid

Customer Overview

The Salvation Army has been supporting those in need without discrimination for 130 years. Nearly 30 million Americans receive assistance from The Salvation Army each year through the broadest array of social services that range from providing food for the hungry, relief for disaster victims, assistance for the disabled, outreach to the elderly and ill, clothing and shelter to the homeless and opportunities for underprivileged children. Out of every dollar spent, 82 cents is used to support those services in 5,000 communities nationwide. The Salvation Army's eastern territory headquarters is located in West Nyack, New York.

Long Backup Times and Tape Management Issues Frustrate IT Staff

The Salvation Army was struggling with long backup times and tape management issues in its eastern territory headquarters. Because full backup jobs were taking most of the weekend to run, The Salvation Army's IT staff found system maintenance increasingly difficult. In addition, the agency's data was growing quickly, and tape management was becoming problematic.

"We were backing up to tape, but our backup times were taking too long and we were constantly pressed for time when we needed to perform maintenance or upgrades," said Michael Levine, Technology Research & Assessment Manager at The Salvation Army. "We looked ahead and saw that tape management was going to be an issue in the very near future. We were transporting the tapes offsite once a week but as our data grew, so did the number of tapes. Finally, we decided to look for a new solution that could reduce our backup windows as well as reliance on tape."

Two-Site ExaGrid System Replaces Tape, Delivers Faster Backups, Ensures Scalability

After evaluating solutions from Quantum and Symantec, The Salvation Army evaluated a disk-based backup system with data deduplication from ExaGrid.

"We liked ExaGrid's approach to data deduplication. Because the deduplication process is performed after the data is backed up, the network and backup servers don't get bogged down and backups run as quickly as possible," said Levine. "We were also impressed with its scalability. The system was designed so that we can easily add another appliance at some point down the road to increase capacity."

Shorter Backup Times, Data Deduplication Help to Maximize Retention

The Salvation Army purchased a two-site ExaGrid system and installed one unit in its datacenter in West Nyack and a second in Syracuse. Data is automatically replicated between the two systems each night. Levine said that in addition to eliminating tape, the agency's backup windows have also been significantly reduced, giving the IT staff plenty of time for maintenance and upgrades.

"Our backups kick off each night at 7:30 p.m. and most of them are finished by 12:30 a.m. With tape, our nightly backups were running all night and finishing up at 8:30 a.m., just in time to start the workday," he said. "We now have plenty of breathing room to work on the system if we need to."

Levine said that ExaGrid's strong data deduplication technology helps to reduce the amount of data stored and increases retention.

"The ExaGrid system does a fantastic job at reducing our data," he said. "We're currently able to keep our weekly backups for four weeks and monthly backups for six months."

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.

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Michael Levine
Technology Research &
Assessment Manager
Salvation Army,
Eastern Territory



Easy Installation, Proactive Customer Support

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 engineers who are dedicated to individual accounts. The system is fully supported and was designed and manufactured for maximum uptime with redundant, hot-swappable components.

Levine worked with ExaGrid's support engineers to install the system.

"After the install was complete, we got in contact with our ExaGrid support engineer and he worked with us to tweak the system and to make sure it was running correctly," said Levine. "ExaGrid's support team worked closely with Symantec's engineers to ensure we were getting the best performance possible."

GRID Architecture Ensures Scalability

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 130TB 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.

"One of the key reasons we chose the ExaGrid system was its scalability, and we haven't been disappointed. In fact, I added two units to the system yesterday and it was seamless. Our ExaGrid customer support engineer assisted me, but I found the process to be simple and straightforward," said Levine. "The ExaGrid really has taken a lot of the pain out of our backups. Our backups and restores are faster and more efficient, and we don't have to manage tape anymore. It's been a great solution for us."

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 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

ExaGrid is the leader in cost-effective disk-based backup solutions. A highly scalable system that works with existing backup applications, the ExaGrid system is ideal for companies looking to quickly eliminate the hassles of tape backup while reducing their existing backup windows. ExaGrid's innovative approach minimizes the amount of data to be stored by providing standard data compression for the most recent backups along with zone-level data deduplication technology for all previous backups. Customers can deploy ExaGrid at primary and secondary sites to supplement or eliminate offsite tapes with live data repositories or for disaster recovery.

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