HCC Life Insurance Company Speeds Backups, Reduces Reliance on Tape with ExaGrid

HCC

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> **Aziz Jiwani**
> **Systems Engineer**

Key Benefits:

- Nightly backups are 6x faster and weekly fulls over 3x faster
- ExaGrid system chosen for its unique deduplication approach and its scalable architecture
- Automated backups save time spent on backup management
- ExaGrid customer support is a 'wonderful resource' and working with a single engineer is a 'fantastic experience'

Customer Overview

For more than 30 years, HCC Life Insurance Company (HCC Life), a subsidiary of HCC Insurance Holdings, Inc., has been one of the nation's leading specialty insurance carriers of medical stop loss, group term life, HMO reinsurance, provider excess and medical excess insurance to self-funded employers. In addition to its extensive suite of products and exceptionally fast claims turnaround times, HCC Life offers value-added services that help reduce claims costs to employers' plans. Rated A+ (Superior) by A.M. Best Company and AA (Very Strong) by Standard & Poor's, HCC Life writes approximately $650 million in medical stop loss and $830 million in life, accident and health premium annually.

Long Backup Times, High Cost of Tape Led to Search for a New Backup Solution

HCC Life had been backing up its data to tape for years. When long nightly tape backups began stretching into the workday and affecting system performance, the company's IT staff decided to look for a new approach in an effort to shorten backup times and reduce the company's reliance on tape.

"Our nightly backups were taking over 12 hours and weekly full backups were stretching past the 40-hour mark. We were also burning through lots of tape and it was becoming time consuming and expensive," said Aziz Jiwani, systems engineer at HCC Life. "We decided to look at disk-based solutions and selected ExaGrid based on its strong data deduplication technology and its scalable architecture."

Two-site ExaGrid System Provides Primary Backup and Automatic Data Replication

HCC Life chose a two-site ExaGrid system with data deduplication. Data is backed up each night to an ExaGrid system in the company's primary data center and is then automatically replicated to a second system located in its disaster recovery site. The two systems work with the company's existing backup application, Veritas Backup Exec.

"We liked ExaGrid's approach to data deduplication because it dedupes the data as it lands on the system so that the backup is performed at full speed. Some of the other products we looked at deduped the data as the backup was running. We felt that the ExaGrid system would deliver faster performance," said Jiwani.

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 as the data is stored. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's byte-level data deduplication technology moves only changes, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

Easy Setup, Proactive, Knowledgeable Customer Support

Jiwani said that he was able to install the ExaGrid system quickly with assistance from the ExaGrid customer support engineer

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assigned to HCC Life. ExaGrid's industry-leading customer support team is staffed by trained, in-house 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.

"We have had a fantastic experience with ExaGrid's customer support. They were a big help during the system setup, and they have continued to be a wonderful resource for us," said Jiwani. "I love the fact that we have an assigned support engineer. It's so convenient to be able to contact the same person each and every time we have a question about the system or about our backup processes. We don't have to explain things over and over to new people every time we call ExaGrid support. Our support engineer is obviously very well versed in the ExaGrid product, but he's made it his business to become familiar with our environment. It's very unusual in the industry to have such wonderful support."

Nightly Backups Reduced from 12 Hours to 2 Hours

Since installing the ExaGrid system, Jiwani reports that the company's nightly backup windows have been reduced from 12 hours to 2 hours. Weekly full backups have been reduced from 40 hours to 12 hours.

"With tape, we could only run one backup job at a time. The ExaGrid enables us to run multiple jobs at the same time so our backups run significantly faster," said Jiwani.

Easy Scalability

According to Jiwani, another major factor in selecting the ExaGrid system was its easy scalability. As HCC Life's backup requirements increase, ExaGrid's architecture will enable the company to easily expand the system to accommodate more data. ExaGrid's computing software makes the system highly scalable, and when plugged into a switch, different sized configurations can be mixed and matched into a single system with capacities of up to a 2PB 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.

"The ExaGrid system will be easy to scale as our data grows," said Jiwani. "We've gained a lot with the ExaGrid. We've been able to decrease our backup times so that we no longer experience

system slowdowns during the day, and we are saving on tape costs. Also, we've been able to automate many of our backup processes and have reduced the amount of staff time we spend managing backups. The system has worked as advertised and it's backed by a tremendous customer support team."

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, SQL, file servers and workstations. High performance agents and options provide fast, flexible, granular protection and scalable management of local and remote server backups.

Intelligent Data Protection

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

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 byte-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.

About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides hyper-converged secondary storage (HCSS) 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**.