

North Kingstown School District Solves Backup Problem with Deduplication

Introduction

The North Kingstown School Department is a K-12 school district serving North Kingstown, Rhode Island. With eight schools and an administration building, the school district educates over 4,400 students each year.



Backup Window and Capacity Drive Change

The North Kingstown school department has nearly 5,000 student, faculty and user accounts on its network. The school department centralizes most of its data and performs full backups each Monday and incremental backups throughout the rest of the week. Each weekend, the IT department backs up data from different schools throughout the district. However, the school department had outgrown its tape library and backups often took 30 hours or more, resulting network slowdowns and sliding backup windows.

“We simply outgrew the capacity of our tape library and we constantly had to feed it tapes just to complete nightly backups,” said Richard Booth, Network Manager at the North Kingstown School Department. “We knew we needed a new solution and began looking around at alternatives.”

North Kingstown School Department and Mosaic

Part of that search included a seminar hosted by Mosaic Technology and ExaGrid Systems. The seminar highlighted ExaGrid’s data deduplication technology. It was during that seminar that Mosaic and North Kingstown began working together.

“At the seminar we learned about ExaGrid,” said Booth. “We really liked its data de-duplication technology because it only saves the changes from backup to backup. It just made so much sense.”

From that initial meeting Mosaic worked with Mr. Booth on configuring the ideal solution. Mosaic also worked with ExaGrid to keep costs within North Kingstown’s budget.

North Kingstown School Department installed the ExaGrid system in its main datacenter where it works with the existing backup application, Symantec Backup Exec. In addition to backups, monthly tape copies – for offsite DR -- are made from the ExaGrid system using the department’s existing tape library.

Company	North Kingstown School Department
Located	North Kingstown, RI
Industry	Education
Concern	Excessive backup window and back up capacity exceeding tape library
Solution	Partner with Mosaic Technology to acquire, and implement data deduplication backup system

“Mosaic introduced me to the ExaGrid solution and worked with me to find the ideal configuration for my environment and made sure that it fit within my budget requirements.”

Rich Booth
 Network Manager
 North Kingstown School Department

ExaGrid Deduplication Gets an “A”

The North Kingstown School Department found an ideal solution with ExaGrid. They leveraged their existing backup application and tape library. This helped them in terms of both cost and limited learning curve.

“ExaGrid was easy to set up,” said Booth. “I barely needed to look at the manual to install it. I simply plugged it into the network, stepped through a few configuration screens and it was up and running with Backup Exec. Then, I just pointed the shares to the ExaGrid instead of the tape library and it was done. All in all, setting up the ExaGrid took about 20 minutes.”

Since installing ExaGrid, the school department has upgraded its network and is now sees backups completed in just a few hours.

“It’s really amazing,” said Booth. “Our backups now run very quickly and complete well within our backup windows. We’re also very happy with ExaGrid’s data deduplication capabilities. It’s extremely effective at reducing our data and lets us maximize the amount of data we keep on the system.”

Booth estimates that he had been spending five hours per week managing tape. With the ExaGrid system, he now spends 30 minutes.

“Once a week I check the ExaGrid system to make sure everything is running smoothly,” said Booth. “Our backups are all automated with ExaGrid and we’ve reduced our reliance on tape tremendously. Just knowing our backups are completed flawlessly every night is a wonderful thing.”

How Exagrid Does It

Speedy Backups -- ExaGrid delivers extremely fast backup performance because data is written directly to disk at disk-to-disk speed. De-duplication is done after the data is stored.

Saves Disk Space -- ExaGrid combines last backup compression with data deduplication. This stores changes from backup to backup instead of full file copies. This reduces disk space requirements by 10:1 to 50:1 or more.

Scalability to Add Capacity, Flexibility to Add Disaster Recovery Site

For Booth, scalability was important in selecting ExaGrid. ExaGrid’s GRID computing software makes it highly scalable. When plugged into a switch, different size configurations can be mixed and matched into a single GRID system with capacities up to 60TB. Once virtualized, they appear as a single system to the backup server, with automatic load balancing of all data across servers.

“ExaGrid gives us a great deal of flexibility. Not only can it grow in terms of capacity, but we can also add a second ExaGrid system at some point in the future to replicate data to another location and completely eliminate tape,” said Booth.

About Mosaic Technology

Mosaic Technology, a privately held company, provides IT infrastructure solutions for companies worldwide through three divisions: Value add solutions, IT Asset Management and Recovery, and Used and Refurbished IT Hardware.

Mosaic designs and delivers vendor neutral virtualization solutions that incorporate server consolidation, virtual storage, desktop virtualization, backup, and disaster recovery into an integrated whole.

Based in Salem, NH, Mosaic has sales and technical offices throughout the United States and associates worldwide.