Veeam and ExaGrid Enable OGD to Deliver an Innovative New Service

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> **Joep Piscaer**
> **CTO Operator Groep Delft**

Customer Overview

Operator Groep Delft (OGD) is one of the Netherlands' market-leading IT service providers, delivering office automation services to its customers in the fields of end-user management, service delivery management, system operations, and outsourcing. The company has a large focus on organizations within the local government sector, public schools sector, finance sector, and various other industries. Founded in 1988 and headquartered in Delft, OGD now has offices in Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Enschede and Utrecht, with over 1,000 highly trained employees.

Veeam and ExaGrid Meet the Stringent Demands of New Infrastructure as a Service Platform

In 2014, OGD determined that there was an opportunity in the market to deliver an innovative new service to organisations that want a more robust IT platform than they can develop for themselves. As a result, OGD designed and implemented an Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) platform, which enables customers to outsource their IT environments by simply migrating their applications and data onto the OGD platform.

To be compelling to customers, OGD knew that it needed the IaaS solution to be incredibly robust and stable so that it could deliver against a range of Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The solution also needed to be capable of scaling, without huge additional cost, to meet the growth demands of each customer. And, it needed to be very easy to implement so that OGD could meet these growth demands without a huge investment in support staff. As a result, OGD began to select best-in-class providers for all of the components of the IaaS solution.

Joep Piscaer, CTO at OGD, explains: "We were certain that we wanted to build our IaaS platform around VMware's vSphere from the beginning. However, we had to make sure that we could find a vendor or combination of vendors who provide a data movement and backup solution that is best-in-class in a virtual environment and that meets our specific platform requirements."

Protecting Data Is a Cornerstone of the IaaS Platform

OGD knew that protecting customer data was vital to success. In fact, OGD decided that to stand out from the competition, it would differentiate its platform on recoverability rather than performance grounds. Piscaer explains: "We decided to set very demanding – and appealing – Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs) and Recovery Point Objectives (RPOs). This meant that the choice of backup solution was strategic – particularly as our Gold SLA package guarantees data will be restored within four hours.

"We knew we needed a comprehensive solution that could meet the stringent demands of our IaaS platform, whilst also enabling us to manage and deliver on our SLAs.

"Furthermore, we knew our solution also needed to be scalable without being resource or bandwidth hungry and, most importantly, support our virtual environment.

"Another important factor was to have a solution that easily integrates with our existing platform, and has the ability to automate our processes. That is why we chose Veeam."

With the help of Veeam, OGD reviewed a number of backup storage appliances. ExaGrid was an easy choice since it was the only solution that met all of OGD's specific requirements and at a much lower cost than competitive solutions.

Veeam-ExaGrid Combination Vital to Platform Success

Veeam's close partnership and tight integration with ExaGrid are also vital to the success of OGD's IaaS platform. The combination enables OGD to deliver on its SLAs and also to fully on-board a new customer – including migrating their applications and data – in less than two days!

Piscaer explains: "In order to on-board a new customer to our platform, we need to migrate large quantities of data. Veeam's CloudConnect and ExaGrid enable us to do that very quickly and painlessly. We simply drop an on-premises Veeam installation and migrate all data using Cloud Connect to the IaaS platform.

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Because of this tight integration with Veeam, OGD is able to give its customers full control over their backups so that customers can back up or restore data whenever they want to. Piscaer said, "Our customers can now run their own backups and restores via Veeam's Quick Backup and Quick Rollback. This gives customers immense freedom and control over their data, which is a huge differentiator for us. We carry out a synthetic full backup once a week plus daily incrementals as standard." Customers are able to use Veeam's self-service portal to restore granular items (files, mailboxes, etc.).

ExaGrid combines standard compression along with zone-level 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 adaptive data deduplication is performed in parallel with backups to reduce storage consumption. When a second site is used, the cost savings are even greater because ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication technology moves only the changes from backup to backup, requiring minimal WAN bandwidth.

ExaGrid's Scale-out Architecture and Unique Approach to Deduplication Central to Purchase Decision

Before deploying an ExaGrid solution, OGD decided to run a trial to be sure the solution would deliver the required RTO performance. During the trial, OGD had such confidence in the ExaGrid solution that it migrated a live customer to the platform. After a one-month trial using ExaGrid's EX13000E appliance, OGD was so impressed with ExaGrid's performance that it purchased two EX21000E appliances to bootstrap the backup environment.

"As per Veeam's recommendation, ExaGrid met all our requirements at a much lower cost than we had budgeted. In fact, we received twice as much storage and performance delivery with ExaGrid, compared to the other vendor solutions we reviewed," said Piscaer.

Although the price-performance was impressive, it was ExaGrid's combination of a scale-out architecture and unique approach to deduplication that clinched the deal. Piscaer explains: "ExaGrid's scale-out approach provides us with the plug-and-play performance we need to be able to grow our platform. It has none of the growth limitations of the scale-up vendors. But the most important factor for us was the way ExaGrid handles deduplication. It is the separate Landing Zone and Repository that make it possible for us to deliver the Gold-level RTO.

"Most importantly, the level of integration between Veeam and ExaGrid is a major advantage to our business and has completed the chain for us. The fact that the two vendors work together at an engineering level and that ExaGrid is a supported backup platform for Veeam means we have nothing to worry about."

Straightforward Installation Requires No Prior Knowledge or Experience

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 assigned

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

"The installation of the ExaGrid system was a breeze. Because the ExaGrid engineer's flight was delayed, I began the installation of our two EX21000E appliances while I was waiting. I was able to get the system up and running myself without any previous experience using or installing the system. Once we added the two new units into the GRID, our data automatically migrated without the need for us to monitor or do anything," said Piscaer. "I'm very happy with my experience with using ExaGrid. The quality and knowledge of the support team have been very good, and the combined support with Veeam is another great bonus for us."

ExaGrid uses a GRID-based configuration, where each appliance contains processing power, memory, bandwidth as well as disk. When the system needs to expand, additional appliances are simply attached to the GRID. This type of configuration allows the system to maintain all the aspects of performance as the amount of data grows. In addition, as new ExaGrid appliance nodes are added to the GRID, the ExaGrid automatically load balances available capacity, maintaining a virtual pool of storage that is shared across the GRID.

"Our experience shows that ExaGrid always delivers on its promises. I am confident in the system's simplicity, quality and reliability and can say that we have plans to grow from two to 50 appliances as we add more customers," continued Piscaer. Version 4.8 of ExaGrid's software enables up to 25 appliances to be connected in a single scale-out GRID and adds both bandwidth throttling and encryption during replication to further enhance ExaGrid's stress-free backup solutions. ExaGrid's largest system can take in a full backup that is 40 percent larger and has an ingest rate that is six times faster than other deduplicating storage systems, at half the price.

Faster Backups, More Efficient Data Storage, and Better DR Protection

The combination of ExaGrid's and Veeam's industry-leading virtual server data protection solutions allows customers to optimize Veeam Backup & Replication™ in Vmware vSphere and

Microsoft Hyper-V virtual environments on ExaGrid's disk-based backup system with data deduplication. This combination provides fast backups and efficient data storage as well as replication to an offsite location for disaster recovery.

The ExaGrid system fully leverages Veeam Backup & Replication's built-in backup-to-disk capabilities and ExaGrid's zone-level data deduplication for additional data reduction – and cost reduction – over standard disk solutions. Customers can use Veeam Backup & Replication's built-in source-side deduplication in concert with ExaGrid's disk-based backup system with zone-level deduplication to further shrink backups.

The ExaGrid-Veeam Accelerated Data Mover integrated with ExaGrid appliances allows all backups, restores, and recoveries to complete faster. The Veeam backup server more efficiently inter-operates with the Veeam data mover using optimized Veeam communications versus generic CIFS. In addition, the entire synthetic full operation occurs on the ExaGrid appliance, eliminating the need to move data between the Veeam backup server and backup storage, which greatly reduces the time to complete a synthetic full compared to generic CIFS.

Customers can perform replication of backups to offsite storage for disaster recovery purposes without sacrificing performance of critical backup and recovery features. By combining the power and performance of Veeam-based VMware vSphere (and Microsoft Hyper-V) virtual machine backups with the ExaGrid appliance, customers can achieve backup and disaster recovery goals quickly and easily.

Veeam Instant VM Recovery from an ExaGrid Backup Appliance

ExaGrid and Veeam also offer the ability to instantly recover a VMware (or Hyper-V) virtual machine by running it directly from a backup on the ExaGrid appliance in the event of a primary storage outage or other issue that causes the VM to become unavailable. This is possible because of Veeam's patented Instant VM Recovery capability and ExaGrid's "landing zone" – a high-speed cache on the ExaGrid appliance that retains the most recent backups in complete form. Once the primary storage environment has been brought back to a working state, the VM running on the ExaGrid appliance can be migrated to primary

About ExaGrid

ExaGrid provides backup storage with a unique landing zone and scale-out architecture. The landing zone provides for the fastest backups, restores and instant VM recoveries. The scale-out architecture includes full appliances in a scalable GRID and provides for a fixed-length backup window as data grows, eliminating expensive forklift upgrades. Learn more at **www.exagrid.com**.