

INSURANCE ASSOCIATION SAVES 200% BY TURNING TO NEXSAN FOR BACKUP AND HYPER-V STORAGE

A NEXSAN CASE STUDY OF ERIE AND NIAGARA ASSOCIATION

For Erie and Niagara Insurance Association, an aging tape backup system was impacting data protection and operating efficiency. Backup windows were shrinking and managing tape was becoming an overwhelming task, especially when data recovery was required. They also needed a powerful and cost efficient solution for their new Hyper-V virtualized environment. By implementing a Nexsan SATABeast for backup and recovery, the company benefited from a simplified data protection strategy and experienced faster backup and recovery performance when compared to their previous IBM NAS system. For the Hyper-V environment, the SATABoy met and exceeded their primary storage expectations.

ENVIRONMENT

- Over 8 TB of data
- Business applications including SQL Server, a SQL cluster-based policy management system and unstructured operational data
- Two Nexsan SATABeasts for backup and disaster recovery
- One SATABoy for primary storage of a Hyper-V virtualized environment

EFFICIENT STORAGE BENEFITS

- Reduced capital and operating expenditures by 200% when compared to competitive storage systems
- Increased backup and recovery performance with cost efficient storage
- Simplified management of multiple storage systems from a “single pane of glass” redundant components
- Reduced rack and floor space requirements as well as power and cooling needs with space and power efficient storage

CUSTOMER OVERVIEW

Based in Williamsville, N.Y., the Erie and Niagara Insurance Association offers a variety of insurance products through a network of independent agents located throughout the state of New York. From business, commercial fire and farm owner insurance, to homeowner, inland marine and landlord insurance, Erie and Niagara Insurance offers policies for businesses and individuals alike. With over 130 years of experience, Erie and Niagara Insurance fills a 30,000 square-foot facility and has premiums in excess of \$50,000,000 and assets of \$106,600,000 year ending 2008.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

Eliminate the Cost, Complexity and Risk of Tape Backup System with High-Performance Disk Based Storage

The Erie and Niagara Insurance Association was facing a common storage management dilemma: a tape backup system was impacting data protection processes and putting the company at great risk of data loss in the event of a disaster. Backup windows were shrinking to an unmanageable point where all critical data couldn't be protected during each backup, and the physical management of backup tapes had become a tedious task. Yet, even more critical, was the fear of significant downtime in the event of a disaster when IT staff would have to search for the correct backup tapes for a restoration and hope that the data stored on tape wouldn't be corrupted.

Much of Erie and Niagara Insurance Association's dramatic growth can be attributed to its deft use of technology to service its policyholders and lower overall costs. So when it came to storage management, they were determined to apply this same advanced approach to protecting their growing volumes of data. They needed to move from a tape-based solution to a disk-based backup architecture that was price/performance advantageous while offering simplified management to reduce staff resources.

“We were looking to switch from a Tivoli tape backup solution to an eVault disk-based backup and needed disk storage,” said Scott Stock, information technology manager for Erie and Niagara Insurance Association. “After considering brand name storage we found it to be too complex and expensive for this process. We found that Nexsan was able to meet our high performance requirements at a lower cost. In addition, the Nexsan devices were easier to manage and integrated seamlessly with our eVault solution.”



CASESTUDY 2

“Nexsan’s storage systems continue to deliver terrific performance, rock-solid reliability and simplified management.”

SCOTT STOCK

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGER
FOR ERIE AND NIAGARA INSURANCE
ASSOCIATION

ENERGY SAVING TECHNOLOGY

Nexsan’s revolutionary AutoMAID (Automatic Massive Array of Idle Disks) energy saving technology transparently places disk drives into an idle state to vastly reduce power and cooling costs. AutoMAID delivers the cost-effective benefits of MAID 2.0 without the limitations of slow access times and special host software.

- AutoMAID reduces power and cooling costs
- Nexsan’s AutoMAID delivers the benefits of MAID without the performance limitations
- Available on all Nexsan products

AUTOMAID SAFETY FEATURES

- In maximum power saving mode, drive spin up is sequenced to reduce power surges
- Drives automatically wake up for periodic surface scan to ensure data integrity (user configurable)
- AutoMAID can be used with data-intensive server applications by delivering energy savings without performance compromise

Erie and Niagara Insurance was also facing similar data protection needs for the primary storage of their virtualized environment based on Microsoft Hyper-V. Much like their secondary storage requirements, the insurance organization’s primary storage solution needed to provide high performance while being cost efficient. They also needed a power efficient solution to realize greater OPEX benefits from their new virtual infrastructure with the consolidation of their servers.

“Nexsan’s AutoMAID energy savings technology was among the most unique solutions we evaluated,” said Stock. “It enables us to make the most of our Hyper-V environment by reducing power consumption to slash operational costs. It is ideally suited for our environment.”

SOLUTION:

Two Nexsan SATABeasts for backup and disaster recovery processes and sataboy for hyper-v primary storage

Erie and Niagara Insurance ultimately purchased two Nexsan SATABeasts for backup and disaster recovery. At the company’s primary site, a SATABeast is used for backup storage of its virtual machines, SQL server database and actively accessed, unstructured data including images of scanned policies. A second SATABeast is housed at a secure offsite disaster recovery location where data is both backed up (using eVault) and replicated for business continuity. In all, the Nexsan solutions protect over 8 TB of Erie and Niagara Insurance’s image files, SQL Server data and other unstructured information.

“We wanted our backups to be stored on storage systems with high performance RAID 6 and Nexsan provided the best solution,” said Stock. “We were very impressed with the RAID availability and the cost-effective redundancy of the Nexsan solution. Nexsan also pleasantly surprised us with performance that was faster than our previous IBM NAS system. The SATABeast was faster, wrote quicker and had better controller technology.”

The insurance company also selected a SATABoy for the primary storage of its virtual Hyper-V environment. The SATABoy delivered the high performance Erie and Niagara Insurance needed for the heavy transaction volume of its insurance policy and claim operations. It was also a perfect complement to the operational costs savings they have already seen through server consolidation because the SATABoy delivers an impressive power savings for added operational efficiency

SATABOY BENEFITS

- **High performance**—The SATABeasts incorporate advanced features such as dual RAID 6 engines, a high performance cache mirroring ASIC and active/active failover to deliver uncompromising availability, reliability and performance. The SATABoy is also a high-performance RAID solution built around the latest high performance SATA disk drives.
- **High reliability**—The SATABeast and SATABoy systems offer redundant and individually hot-swappable active components (RAID controllers, fans, power supplies and disks). Further, they each offer industry leading system reliability with an innovative design in vibration reduction and cooling;
- **“Single pane of glass” management**—The SATABeast and SATABoy systems support management in one, central location through a simplified management console without the need for special agents or capacity keys;
- **Highly efficient storage for backup and recovery**—The SATABeasts provide Erie and Niagara Insurance with industry leading density - up to 42 TB in only 4U. With higher density, there are fewer fans, power supplies and RAID controllers to support which ultimately delivers reduced operating cost through power and space efficiencies.
- **High power efficiency**—The SATABeast and SATABoy systems also come standard with AutoMAID™ energy saving technology that reduces power consumption and cooling without penalizing storage performance .

RESULTS:

High Performance and Power Efficiency Delivers 200% Capital and Operational Savings

The Nexsan storage environment has delivered significant reliability and performance for Erie and Niagara Insurance that is far beyond what it received with its previous tape-based storage solution. Not only is data more reliably protected with better performance, the insurance company has also seen both capital and operational cost savings. The low initial costs of the solutions combined with power efficiency and simplified management have helped to maximize Erie and Niagara’s return on investment with an overall cost savings of 200%.

ABOUT NEXSAN

Nexsan® is a leading independent provider of disk-based storage systems purpose-built and priced for the mid-market, offering industry-leading reliability, space and power efficiency. Nexsan storage systems provide scalability, integrity and security for growing volumes of unstructured data and are ideal for virtual storage, data protection, secure online archiving, bulk and cloud storage applications. Overcoming the challenges of traditional storage, Nexsan delivers a different kind of storage experience with easy-to-use, efficient and enterprise-class solutions that reduce the complexity and cost of storage. Nexsan delivers its storage systems through a select global partner ecosystem of solution providers, OEMs and system integrators. Nexsan is based in Thousand Oaks, Calif. For more information, visit the company’s website at www.nexsan.com.

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