

Nexsan 10 Minute Case Study



Insurance Association Saves 200% with Nexsan for Backup and Microsoft Virtual Server Storage

A Nexsan 10 Min. Case Study on Erie and Niagara Association

Quick Summary

For Erie and Niagara Insurance Association, an aging tape backup system was impacting data protection and operational 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 Microsoft Virtual Server 2005 virtualized server 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 SAN system. For the Microsoft Virtual Server 2005 environment, the SATABoy met and exceeded their primary storage expectations.



Erie and Niagara Insurance Association



“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

ENVIRONMENT

- Over 8 TB of data
- One SATABoy for primary storage of the company’s Microsoft Virtual Server 2005 virtualized environment and consolidation of primary business application data
- One Nexsan SATABeast for local backup and another for offsite disaster recovery

NEXSAN HIGHLY EFFICIENT STORAGE BENEFITS

- Reduced capital and operating expenditures by 200% when compared to competitive storage systems
- Increased backup and recovery performance with cost efficiency
- Simplified management of multiple storage systems from a “single pane of glass”
- Space efficient storage reduced rack and floor space requirements

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 #1: 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: their 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 to perform data restoration and hope that the data stored on tape had not been 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



THE NEW NEXSAN STORAGE INFRASTRUCTURE HAS DELIVERED:

High performance.

SATABeast incorporates 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. SATABoy is also a high-performance RAID solution built around the latest high performance SATA disk drives.

High reliability.

The SATABeast and SATABoy storage 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.

SATABeast and SATABoy 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 provided 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.

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 solution 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 eVault.”

BUSINESS CHALLENGE #2: INCREASE PRIMARY STORAGE PERFORMANCE WITH COST EFFICIENT AND RELIABLE, DISK-BASED STORAGE

Erie and Niagara Insurance was also facing similar data protection needs for the primary storage of their virtualized server environment based on Microsoft Virtual Server 2005. Much like their secondary storage requirements, the insurance organization’s primary storage solution needed to provide high performance while being cost efficient. The more efficient solution also needed to be extremely reliable for greater operational benefits in support of the company’s virtual infrastructure.

“Our requirements called for affordable storage that was easy-to-use and would provide outstanding performance and reliability. We sought to slash both capital and operational costs and Nexsan really demonstrated advantages that separated their products from competitive offerings,” added Stock.

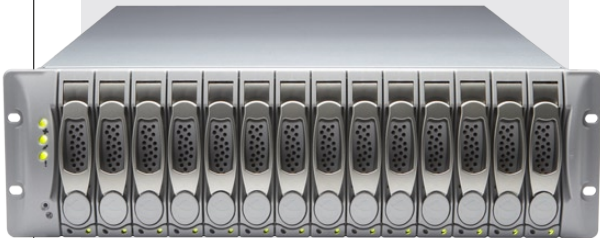
SOLUTION: TWO NEXSAN SATABEASTS FOR BACKUP AND DISASTER RECOVERY AND A SATABOY FOR VIRTUALIZED SERVER-BASED PRIMARY STORAGE

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, business applications 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, business application data and unstructured data.

SATABeast®



SATABoy®



“We are so confident in Nexsan that we expect to place additional SAS and SATA systems in service for SQL server storage and other production network needs, including file and print.”

Scott Stock, information technology manager for Erie and Niagara Insurance Association

“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 SAN. 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 impressive power savings for added operational efficiency.

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%. □

Presented by Nexsan Technologies

About Nexsan

Nexsan Corporation is a leading provider of energy-efficient, long-term storage systems. Nexsan delivers secure storage appliances and modular, capacity-optimized disk-storage systems for a broad range of applications including fixed content storage and archiving, email, medical imaging, compliance and litigation support, disk-based backup, digital video security, and rich media.

Nexsan's solutions are the choice of small and medium-sized companies as well as large global enterprises and major governmental agencies around the world who are seeking cost-correct, high density storage solutions. Founded in 1999 and based in Thousand, Oaks, Calif., Nexsan sells its products exclusively through a select global network of VARs, OEMs and system integrators. For more information, please see the company's website at www.nexsan.com



555 St. Charles Drive • Suite 202 • Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
Toll-free: (866) 4NEXSAN • Main Line: (805) 418-2700 • Fax: (805) 418-2799
European Office: +44 (0) 1332 291 600 • www.nexsan.com