

## **Don't Let Data Backup, Get Your Back Up**

*Dave Beesley, managing director for managed IT and data security specialist Network Defence, explains how implementing an easier, safer and more efficient data backup and disaster recovery solution will help businesses avoid unnecessary data loss and the risk of litigation, saving them time and money*

Data backup – it can be time consuming and costly; making it a pain point for many IT managers. However, data backup is a vital part of business operations and something every company – big and small - should be doing.

The majority of companies understand and accept that data needs to be backed up, but for some it may not be clear exactly *why* it is so vital to business?

So, why should you back up? Simple, to help your company avoid the financial cost, legal penalties and potential loss of business associated with improper data management. At some point most businesses will undoubtedly face one of the following issues; corrupt files, hardware failure, virus or spyware infection and even theft, and these can all lead to data loss.

Significant financial loss and legal penalties are major consequences of not maintaining proper backups when critical data loss occurs, therefore companies need to take electronic data management seriously, because not doing so could be detrimental to business.

Recent research shows that companies that lose their data in a disaster find themselves out of business within two years. Findings of a survey have shown that 43 percent of companies were immediately put out of business by a "major loss" of computer records, and another 51 percent permanently closed their doors within two years — leaving a mere six percent "survival" rate.

It's therefore important for businesses to ensure that data is securely and reliably stored and capable of being retrieved swiftly and easily to support business efficiency and avoid potentially going out of business.

The best defence is having a data backup strategy in place, but what is the most effective approach to this?

### **Deploying a backup strategy**

There are several options when it comes to data backup. These include tape, hard-drive and CD/DVD backup - however these traditional backup solutions can be time consuming and expensive to maintain and can easily be lost, stolen or damaged.

For several decades businesses have utilised tape-based backup schemes, but many have found they increase the amount of time and effort needed to administer backup and recovery tasks. Without manual intervention, backup tapes remain in the tape drive, leaving data vulnerable to physical events. Furthermore, if tapes are sent offsite there is also a significant delay in those tapes returning when a restore is required.

Tapes are also notoriously failure-prone. They are vulnerable to degradation by the environment and often get stuck, broken or worn out. They are also subject to human error such as being misplaced or people forgetting to change them.

CD and DVD media are inexpensive and widely used, but disks can be easily scratched or damaged by the sun, which may result in loss of data. And again like tapes, they can be easily misplaced.

Another factor to take into consideration is how is your data going to be stored offsite? A backup copy must always be kept offsite and managed securely. If anything were to happen to the office i.e. a fire, theft or flood, and all your backup copies were kept on the same premises as your original copies – you could easily lose your entire business.

So what's the most effective way to overcome these backup issues? Automate it by deploying a cloud-based service.

## **The convenience of the cloud**

Cloud backup or online data backup allows users to send their data to be backed up to a remote site without the associated cost of setting up and managing a remote data centre – which is extremely beneficial to SMEs looking to keep costs down. Cloud storage providers have a cluster of highly scalable managed servers that can be used to store and retrieve any amount of data, at any time, from anywhere on the web. All your business needs to have to use such a service is an Internet connection and sufficient bandwidth.

This solution has numerous benefits over traditional backup solutions. Cloud backup is convenient because the information can be accessed from any Internet-connected device, information can be more easily shared and digital information is easier to manage, retrieve and transfer.

The main advantages to cloud backup include:

**Efficiency and reliability:** Providers use state of the art technology such as disk-based backup, encryption, compression, data de-duplication and server and storage virtualisation to reduce storage and transfer requirements and make backup as efficient and as secure as possible.

**Scalability:** Businesses can leverage unlimited scalability from a third party cloud provider and backup services can be configured to backup as much or as little data as needed, meeting the changing needs of the business.

**Improved recovery time:** As mentioned previously for a recovery from tape, an operator would need to recall the tape, load it, locate the data and recover the data. File recovery from online storage is faster; it doesn't require physical transport from the offsite location, tape handling or seek time. Files to be recovered are located and streamed over the Internet connection, saving time.

**Accessibility:** Offsite data copies are accessible from any Internet-connected device or location, this provides an added measure of insurance in the event of a regional disaster.

**Automated backup:** With cloud backup, administrators can set the schedule for how often backups should run throughout the day. This eliminates the risks associated with manual backup.

**Reduced infrastructure management:** When using a cloud service there is no need to worry about upgrades, migrations or technology becoming obsolete. The burden of the backup infrastructure lies with the service provider.

### **The right choice**

Most good cloud backup providers do offer the above mentioned functionalities and benefits, but what else should be considered when choosing a cloud service and provider that's right for you?

Security, reliability and cost are most likely the top three factors a business will take into consideration when choosing any service. So when it comes to data backup look for a solution that offers you more in these key areas.

With your data being stored offsite how can you ensure it is as secure as it possibly can be? We have already mentioned that cloud backup solutions offer data encryption facilities so that your data is compressed and encrypted, meaning it is secure in storage offsite and inaccessible by others.

However, to further ensure the security and integrity of an organisation's offsite data, certain cloud backup providers equip their data centres with on-premises security teams and have restricted visitor access. They also install alarm systems to enhance the overall level of security. While it's necessary to ensure data is secure in its offsite location, what about ensuring its security while it's in transit? This means that the traffic between your business and the

cloud backup provider is encrypted. This is equally important and is something businesses need to consider when choosing a service provider.

Look for a provider that offers a solution which also protects the integrity of data being transferred offsite. Solutions which apply multiple layers of encryption and highly redundant disk-based hardware in a fully encrypted and secure format, will ensure your data is impenetrable no matter at which stage the backup process is.

Some providers also offer greater reassurance when it comes to the reliability of your data, with some making up to three copies of an organisation's primary data; one local backup and two offsite data backups to geographically-separate data centres. This gives added assurance that in the event of a disaster recovery situation, your data will be available and can be quickly restored.

In addition, a provider that uses efficient replication techniques designed to conserve bandwidth will minimise the cost of disaster recovery, helping you keep your costs down. Some also provide 24/7 monitoring, management and reporting features and capabilities that many companies may not be able to otherwise afford.

### **Peace of mind**

A robust, secure data backup and recovery plan is crucial for any company, regardless of its size, and as part of its business plan an organisation should have a solution in place to ensure data is protected and easily accessible whenever it is needed.

With the right solutions, which support regulatory compliance and best practice, companies can not only overcome data storage and legality issues, but can also help improve business efficiency.

No one can predict when data loss will happen, but when disaster strikes, such as a virus or an outage, having the right data backup solution in place will be a much appreciated precaution made.

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