

Data Backups - One Key to Business Survival

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Your customer data is a precious resource that can literally be worth its weight in gold! If used properly, it can be mined over and over for additional sales and referrals. Do you use this gold mine to increase the profitability of your business?

You should! It can mean the difference between business survival and failure.

Why then do so few business owners take the time to ensure that it is adequately protected? Are we too busy? Perhaps you just didn't know how to protect it, or couldn't afford the software and hardware required to back up your data correctly.

Ask yourself these questions:

Is there anything more important to my business than my customer data? What would happen to my business if all of my data were destroyed?

Consider this common scenario. A client calls frantic about lost business revenue and reputation if she couldn't recover her customer data. She had over five years of information on her computer when the hard drive decided to make her life interesting.

So what are her choices? Renter the data manually, if she has hard copies available. Call every customer and ask for their information again, won't that make them feel secure about her company. Or call a data recovery technician. Their services can start at a thousand dollars and go up rapidly from there!

Windows XP provides a fully functional backup utility, for free!

Before you run the setup wizard, you need to answer a few questions.

What data do I need to backup?

Only backup data that is necessary. Use the KISS (Keep It Simple Silly) method. Your customer database and correspondence should be backed up as a minimum.

How often do I want to back up my data?

How often does your customer data change? Does a significant amount of data change on a daily basis? Weekly?

Where do I want to store my data backup?

Most data backups still use a tape drive to store the data. The problem is that they cost a fortune! The tapes alone are expensive. Alternatives are to store your data backup on another computer on your network or copy it to a CD or DVD writable disk.

Ok, so you want to backup your data. What now? Before we do that review the table below:

Full Backup

- Copies and stores a complete duplicate of your data every time it runs.
- Takes the most time to run and the most storage space.
- Quickest data recovery feature.
- Easiest!

Incremental Backup

- Copies and stores only data changed since the last backup.
- Must be combined with a full backup, and any other incremental backups.
- Most complicated.

Differential Backup

- Copies and stores data changed since the last full backup.
- Must be combined with a full backup and the last differential backup.
- Middle of the road.

If you have a relatively small amount of data, I would suggest a daily full backup. If you have a larger amount of data you might combine the full backup with a differential backup. Simple huh?

The next question is how to store the data backup. Even though it takes a little extra work, I have my clients back their data up to a DVD writable disk. First, set the wizard to back the data up to a folder. Usually this folder is on another computer. Then burn this data to a DVD burner and place the disk in a secure location for retrieval as necessary.

If you don't feel comfortable setting this up yourself, any competent PC technician can do it for you.

Whether you do the setup yourself or have it setup by a professional technician you are taking the first step in ensuring the long term survival of your business. Please take the time to do this.

Ultimately your customers don't care how or why you lost their information, they just care that you did. I'll leave you with this statistic:

Estimates suggest that 80% of small businesses that suffer a serious computer failure cease trading within two years. Will yours be one of them?