



Honey I lost all our records!

By Tim Chin, CL Tech Solutions, Inc (www.cltechsolutions.com/backup101.html)

There are two types of people – those who have lost data, and *those who will*.

“That file was just here an hour ago!”

The file could have been a spreadsheet, picture, or your favorite song. There’s a good chance you know someone who’s lost a file before. What if next time it’s you and it’s a family photo, or a multi-million dollar proposal? What would you pay to get that file back? Data recovery isn’t always successful and it’s ***always*** expensive.

Worse yet, you go to use your computer, and the screen is blank. You try to restart the computer. And nothing happens. *It’s too late* - the hard drive has crashed! You’ve just lost YEARS of pictures, music, and hard work!

There are many reasons why people don’t backup their computers. Here are some of the reasons I frequently hear:

1. I didn’t think this would ever happen to me – computer crashes only happen to others.
2. There was no time to backup the computer.
3. I wasn’t sure how to backup the computer.
4. A backup system *cost too much*
5. I didn’t know I needed a backup system

Whatever the reason was – it outweighed backing up your system properly. But think about it – how long did it take you to create those files? How long will it take to re-create the files you’ve lost (if you can)? How much time and money did you really save by not backing up your systems? Think about these statistics ¶ :

- 31% of PC users have lost all of their files due to events beyond their control.
- 34% of companies fail to test their tape backups, and of those that do, 77% have found tape back-up failures.
- 60% of companies that lose their data will shut down within 6 months of the disaster.
- Data recovery from a hard drive crash, can cost *upwards of \$7500, and success is not guaranteed*

A backup system is not the easiest thing to set up, but it’s not rocket science either. An effective backup plan takes into account your individual needs. All good backup plans also include answers to these five key questions:

What are you going to backup: Which files?

Knowing what to save and what to throw away is the challenge of packrats everywhere. When it comes to digital files, it is important to know what you should keep and what you can afford to lose. Backing up everything may not be the right answer.

When will you backup your files: How often?

Do you use your computer to create new files every day? Are you in a business that does client transactions every hour of the day? Knowing how often to backup and when to do so is an important consideration.

Where will your backups be stored? A good backup plan includes taking a copy off-site in the event of a fire or other catastrophe?

By having a copy of your backups off site, you will reduce your risk against on-site 'disasters'. There are several methods for off-site storage including on-line backup systems, as well as off-site storage facilities to store your backup tapes and/or hard drives. It's up to you (or your IT professional) to decide what methods fit your scenario best, but it is critical that this layer in your protection does not get cut from your budget!

How will the backup be conducted? What software/hardware combination will you use?

An optimum backup plan should take into account the technical abilities of the user and automate as much as possible. A system that requires a PhD to operate is not right for most people. Backups should be run automatically. There should be no need for human intervention on a daily basis.

Modern solutions have eliminated the need to change tapes and can include redundant array of hard drives, or a robotic tape drive. There are even ways to backup your data to the internet so that you can access it from any computer in the world!

Can I use my backup when it is needed?

You can backup all of the data that you want, but unless you can restore the data when needed, your backups are useless. A regularly scheduled test of your backups should be performed (at minimum on a quarterly basis). Depending on how often the data changes and the frequency of your backup schedule, you may want to test your backups on a more frequent basis (such as weekly). Most businesses usually find a happy medium between a quarterly and monthly basis.

An effective backup plan can help manage risk and save you time and money in the long run. A poorly developed backup plan could be worse than none at all. Be sure you are able to backup and restore your data with confidence by asking yourself the questions above!

For help with any of the above components, or to help you build a comprehensive backup solution, please contact CL Tech Solutions, Inc at (610) 446-1360, backup101@cltechsolutions.com, or www.cltechsolutions.com/backup101.html