

Erasing the tape-storage mentality amongst SMEs

There are still SMEs using tape storage as their main method of backup. Little do they realise that as the technology becomes obsolete, so too does the means of recovering vital data, says Eoin Blacklock of keepITsafe

A VERY interesting fact for anyone still using tape as their method of backup is that the only way companies can read data off a tape is to use the same model tape drive. This is a huge issue if the tape drive has packed in and companies need to track down the same model.

“If one component is a different model then companies can forget completely about restoring files without using specialist data recovery experts at a huge cost. To make matters worse, tape backup cannot guarantee a full restore of data plus it also has a lower level of encryption and security than disk to disk backup,” says Eoin Blacklock, managing director, keepITsafe.

Added to this problem is the sheer effort of traditional tape backup: it takes time, money and resources to schedule and manage backups, change disks and tapes, and transport them to a secure facility.

In order to ensure data is actually restorable all of this backup media must be tested to verify that they are labelled and catalogued properly, uncorrupted and free from physical damage.

“Most businesses that do their own tape backup know that data restoration from tape is not reliable.”

At this stage some SMEs might be thinking that it is a good idea to have a combination of onsite/offsite backup just in case but, says Blacklock, the fact is that with a fully managed and fully monitored online backup solution it is not necessary to have an onsite backup solution.

“However, some online backup providers will give the option of backing up to an onsite appliance as well as offsite and some providers even guarantee a next day onsite



Eoin Blacklock, managing director, keepITsafe

recovery of data in the case of a disaster.”

“In a nutshell, online backup guarantees a full restore of your data as all data is secured to multiple data centres. All data is automatically encrypted before it is transferred offsite, which means it is also the most secure option for data backup.”

Tapes can be lost, stolen and forgotten, Blacklock points out, whereas a fully managed online backup solution cannot be.

“It is critical to have your data stored online and offsite especially to avoid data disasters from fire, flood or any other events that are out of your control.”

Aside from this the daily burden of data backup is removed from your often time-strapped staff: “Peace of mind is sometimes forgotten as a tangible business benefit.”

KeepITsafe’s service ensures that customer data is locked away in multiple data-centres guarded 24/7 and monitored by qualified engineers – something tape, other backup mediums and some online backup providers cannot provide.”

The merits of online versus other offsite storage methods

aside, the biggest mistake some companies make is taking the attitude of ‘it will never happen to me’, says Blacklock: “The hard truth is that unless you have a secure and encrypted way of storing your data in multiple data centres your data is not 100pc secure and will not be available to you for restore when you need it the most.

“Over the last 12–18 months these assumptions are slowly but surely eroding. This is due to many providers of online backup services and managed services making it their business to educate and inform the SME market of the clear advantages of offsite, online storage to backup their data. Also, with the heightened publicity given to data loss disasters, companies are looking at their disaster recovery planning in greater detail as a result.”

Another form of misunderstanding comes from companies simply not knowing what backup in the cloud really entails: they do not know where their data is being stored.

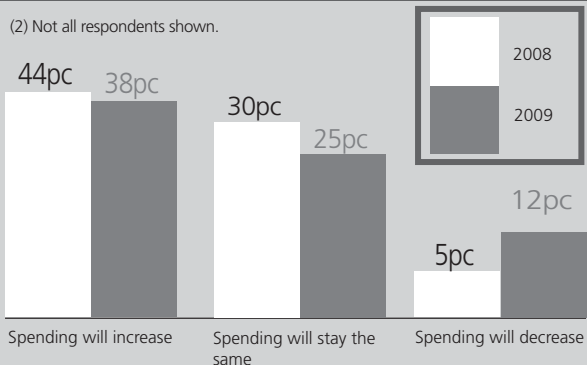
“Just like the clouds in the sky, there are many different types and the fear in the industry is that not all providers will store the data in a secure environment and in multiple locations. With many companies now using applications which are external to their office network it has become much more security-focused.”

Understanding and awareness around secure backup is improving, especially with compliance as a driving factor: the Data Protection Act of 1988/2003 legislates for how organisations use, store and secure data.

“A default on your obligations can result in significant legal and financial penalties,” warns Blacklock. “Legal compliance is an aspect that cannot afford to be overlooked by management when installing an IT system and putting in place a backup solution. All management has a legal obligation to comply with relevant legislation and install the necessary procedures, policy and monitoring to ensure compliance.”

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents reporting their expectations of their organisations’ security spending over the next 12 months compared to last year (2)

(2) Not all respondents shown.



Source: The Global State of Information Security Survey, 2010

