



Online back-up services

When losing data is not an option

By Eoin Blacklock



Data is one of the most critical assets in any business and loss of data is irreplaceable. Too many Irish companies have fallen victim to data corruption, loss of critical information or general backup nightmares. Having a backup plan and strategy in place is crucial to the long term success and growth of a company. Owner/Managers invest heavily in staff, IT equipment, office furniture etc but often do not have a process in place to keep their data secure. There are many reasons for this. The most prominent is the lack of awareness of alternative options outside of the traditional tape backup method and secondly, lack of time. As hectic schedules and work life take a hold, companies are falling prey to data corruption and loss of key business information. All backup corruptions or failures can be avoided by using fully managed online backup services and can give SMBs a peace of mind that their core asset is being monitored 24/7. Everything else can be replaced but not data, and its loss could put you out of business.

Online backup technology has come a long way over the last 5 years. Security and data protection now allow providers to backup 24/7 with the ability to recover files instantaneously. The growth of datacenters such as Digiweb, based in Blanchardstown, has also given online backup suppliers access to state of the art facilities that can house their backup data files. These datacenters have 24 hour security, giving company data the VIP treatment it deserves.

The reality is that hard drives fail. The question is how much it will disrupt your life. Constant data backups are vital against a data-loss catastrophe. The good news is that technology advancements can take away the pain and heartache from management, allowing them to concentrate on growing their business. The cost of investing in a solid backup plan is far less than the often impossible task of trying to restore data.

It's time to back up.....

Economic slow down

The only way to gain peace of mind and create an insurance programme for data is to put a backup plan in place, especially when budgets are tighter and cuts are being made. Most often cutbacks appear in staff reductions which in turn leave less staff

available to conduct a manual tape backup, and an increased workload for remaining staff. What gets left behind - BACKUP. Human error is one of the largest contributing factors in data loss. A prime example is an employee accidentally deleting a file or forgetting to backup.

A scenario that online backup providers are too familiar with is as follows: The long term employee is not happy with your decision to let them go and decides to delete a few "critical" files on their last day. You may laugh, but in our 5 years we have seen this happen too many times. We have also come across employees who have copied hundreds of data onto disks with the hope of taking them offsite. With an online backup service this is flagged as "unusual" and reported to management. Management can breathe easy knowing their data is safe from harm.

The cost of manual tape is often higher than outsourcing your backup solution and also gives you confidence that your data is constantly secure and monitored. There is always that margin of error when a staff member is set the task to backup. Employees work load has doubled and the backup gets left behind.

Business owners work hard to build their companies and fight on through the tougher economic climate. By eliminating or neglecting backup plans they are leaving their business data exposed to external forces.

Tape vs Online Backup

Tapes are expensive and involve a lot of separate costs including tape costs, hardware, software, data capture, local tape storage, plus removal of tapes to an offsite facility. These tapes must be replaced every few years as well as ongoing maintenance. There is also the issue of lost employee productivity due to data disruption and the time spent by the employee to try and restore the lost data - which unfortunately can end up being a task in vain. Tapes need human intervention to work, leaving this backup process open to human error. The tape is also prone to daily wear and tear that online backup is not exposed to.

On the other hand a fully managed online backup service can provide scheduled backups with your data automatically safeguarded offsite in Ireland, where it is readily available for online restoration. In a world where a few minutes of irrecoverable data can lead to lost revenue, lost customers and a severely damaged business reputation, online backup systems can and will save you from the worry and hardship file corruptions can cause.

Key point to take on board is the average downtime when backup restoration needs to be conducted - Tape restoration 2 hours versus online backup restoration 5 minutes, based on an individual file.

Key differences between Tape and Online backup processes

Tape	Fully Monitored Online Backup
Data is more exposed to loss of up to 24 hours as tape usually only takes snapshots once a day. In technical terms this is referred to as Recovery Point Objective (RPO). Tape RPO is <= 1 day as opposed to continuous online backup RPO of <= a few minutes.	Secures your data in on offsite location away from corruption and is monitored 24/7.
Typically take only one copy of your data.	Multiple copies may easily be maintained, at different locations.
Setting up backup policies and choosing a staff member can be time consuming	Setting up offsite service is simple. Choose to back up everything or specific files. All done by your service provider
Tape can be unreliable and more exposed to error	Backups fully monitored making it extra reliable. Data is stored to two separate datacentres



Restoring from tape involves locating the right tape, retrieving it, mounting it, locating file and only then restoring it.	Although your data is securely stored off-site, it can be located and restored immediately - from your desktop.
Restoration of small or single files is challenging, time consuming and inconvenient.	The ability to easily retrieve small and single files becomes a daily benefit, not a chore.
No automation	Fully automated
No guarantee of a successful restore after a shut down	Data is monitored 24/7 and restore can happen with the click of a button. Each of our customers is indemnified for a million each
Tape recovery – the responsibility lies internally	Highly qualified engineers on hand for all backup and restore related issues, supporting the system in case of any issues.

Data compliance – your obligations.

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 have a legal

obligation to comply with relevant legislation and install the necessary procedures, policy and monitoring to ensure compliance.

What is Data Protection?

It is the safeguarding of the privacy rights of individuals in relation to the processing of personal data. The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 confer rights on individuals as well as responsibilities on those persons processing personal data.

The Consequences of Non-Compliance?

1. Inspection by the Data Protection Commissioner
2. Public Naming of persons convicted
3. Conviction with a fine of up to €100,000
4. Susceptible to:
 - Client Data Loss in event of a disaster such as server failure, water damage or fire
 - Confidential Data Disclosure because of staff or non-secure procedures
 - Accusations of Negligence around Data Protection.

Conclusion

Backing up your data is one of the most important areas of your business, yet seems to be neglected in some cases. It should be at the top of your priority list. Without a backup plan in place you are running the risk of losing

company data that cannot be retrieved. Everyone is at risk from human error, power surges, theft or fire – protect your company data and draw up a backup plan that will put your mind at rest and secure your critical information.

Eoin Blacklock is Managing Director of keepITsafe, Ireland's largest online backup provider. By aligning their secure online backup solution with companies' needs it has allowed keepITsafe to backup more than 4 billion files and restore more than 30 million lost files over the last 5 years. All data backed up by keepITsafe is stored and secured in Ireland in two datacentres. www.keepitsafe.ie 1890 222 587

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