



Eoin Blacklock, managing director of KeepItSafe



Emer Kennedy, acting chief commercial officer, Eircom: 'It's all about equipping home workers with an optimum broadband service for their needs'

SAFETY IN CYBERSPACE

Online back-up is a handy service for home workers that removes the risk of losing valuable data, writes **Ian Campbell**

While there is a flourishing market for PC storage products in the home office – with Omega, Seagate and Western Digital leading the charge – some people may feel uneasy about entrusting their back-up to a desktop device, and feel they want something more robust.

There are an increasing number of online storage services, such as Mozy from EMC and KeepItSafe. According to Eoin Blacklock, managing di-

rector of KeepItSafe, 25 per cent of his customers are people working from home. "They might only have two PCs but they still have an accounts database, e-mail and critical Word and spreadsheet documents that they can't afford to lose," he said.

KeepItSafe packages start at €30 a month. The company configures the backups and manages the process because it recognises that many of its customers are not IT-savvy and don't have access to professional IT support. KeepItSafe keeps it simple for them.

"If a backup is missed or

fails for some reason we let the customer know immediately. Or if they delete a file or a database corrupts, they can ring us and we can restore it to how it was the day before," said Blacklock.

For bigger businesses, software is installed on servers but for home workers it will more than likely be loaded on to a PC.

Depending on the size of the business it can take up to 20 minutes to save files, but this requires only a modest broad-

band connection because it only uploads the data that has changed since the last back-up.

The big drivers for uptake of the service are bad user experiences, according to Blacklock. "There isn't a person in the world who hasn't worked on a document that they have subsequently lost. And anyone in business who has sat for four or five hours retyping numbers into a document doesn't want to have to do it again."

Depending on the amount of data, a first back-up is usually

carried out directly to a hard drive. After that it becomes an online service, using 256-bit encryption as files are transferred to a data centre in Ireland. Back-ups can be completed in minutes. File recoveries are automated and can be downloaded by the customer in seconds.

Blacklock described KeepItSafe as "enterprise class" compared with other services like Mozy, which he said were more commoditised. "We provide more of a managed service, with service level agreements and guaranteed recovery point objectives. That's what makes us different."

Adding services to broadband

Shopping for broadband is key to setting up a home office

Eircom is raising its baseline broadband offering and layering services, many of which will have an appeal for self-sufficient home workers. "We have a lot of customers who work from home running a variety of businesses, and it's all about equipping them with an optimum broadband service for their needs," said Emer Kennedy, acting chief commercial officer, Eircom. This includes bundling calls and other services.

For Eircom's uncongested 8Mbps connection – with unlimited national minutes and 60 minutes to any mobile network – an asking price of €52.99 will be quite compelling for the home worker, and there are other services waiting in the wings.

Eircom sells on MozyPro, an EMC backup solution that gives home workers peace of mind by automatically backing up data from a PC. It costs €4.95 a month for 5GB of storage. For another €1.99, Eircom will deploy McAfee as an antivirus checker. It also offers more specialist services, such as mail Ginger, an e-mail marketing tool that costs €23 a month.

Magnet is another broadband provider building up its expertise – particularly around IP telephony, which it now bundles with the data connection in a variety of packages. Magnet tailors services to the sector, including the provision of a static IP address.

"It allows you to take your broadband to the next level, opening up a host of new applications that can improve your home or business broadband connection," said Joe Lavin, product manager at Magnet. "It makes it easier to integrate a remote location into a virtual private network – and you can start making more of voice over IP [VoIP] telephone services."

The company also offers a hosted PBX service, whereby a company's entire telephone infrastructure is hosted and run out of a data centre. It becomes easier to bring different locations, including the home office, into the same virtual IP network.

Corporate benefits from home working

Sophisticated access infrastructure software is breaking down office walls

Through its access infrastructure software Citrix is a leading player in the remote access space, and the concept of flexible working is in its DNA. Patrick Irwin, senior product marketing manager, said there was a long list of reasons why it made sense for companies to encourage home working. Saving money on real estate, greater productivity and a work-life balance that could attract higher calibre employees were his top three reasons.

"Flexible working can substantially reduce expensive office space, allowing companies to downsize by having hot desk areas for more transient employees," he said. "And all the evidence shows that it's a way of getting more productivity out of employees."

He also said it was a strategy with significant HR benefits because it helped companies attract the best brains. "People who value a work-life balance will be more likely to work for a company with a flexible working approach."

A recent spate of natural events has also highlighted how home working allows companies to keep the wheels turning even if staff can't get into the office.

"We have one customer in New York where 80 per cent of employees were able to continue working from home despite the winter freeze bringing the city to a stop. And the recent episode with the volcanic ash has shown us again why it is so important to facilitate home working," he said.



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