Data Backup and Disaster Recovery

Data backup and disaster recovery solutions work on a simple principle of making a copy of your data and storing it in a secondary location that's easily accessible should the main data store get compromised. That second copy can be stored at an onsite location or in a different building, city or state depending on your business continuity requirements (for those of you who think storing it in a different city is an overkill, think New Orleans 2005).

Why It's On Our Radar

For most of our clients, their intellectual property is the most valuable asset they own. From client lists, project data and HR files to meeting notes and emails sent three years ago, you need your information every day to keep your business alive and growing. Yet 90% of the time someone calls us asking for a data backup solution, we can answer the phone with "we're very sorry to hear about your data loss."

Learn from other people's mistakes. It's a fact: you WILL at some point lose your data. It can be something as simple as saving over an existing file with 5 hours of work in it (this quickly gets expensive if you bill $250 an hour), or as dramatic as your server room getting flooded right before an IRS audit. Getting an effective backup and disaster recovery strategy in place may save you many headaches and unpredictable expenses in the future.

Solution Types

Going by the sales pitches you'll hear, there are a thousand ways to get your data backed up. In reality, there is only one major distinction that matters to you: where your data is stored.

- With **onsite storage**, your data will be backed up to a storage device such as a tape drive, hard drive, DVD or some other media — and stored in your office, at least for the short term. The advantages of this method are that you can back up a lot of data at a relatively low cost and restore it very quickly should an incident occur. Unfortunately, this way of backing up does you little good if your entire office goes up in flames.
- With **offsite storage**, a copy of your files is sent via the Internet (usually at night) to a secure location that can be virtually anywhere on the planet. This obviously provides greater physical security, but can cost more as you are usually charged depending on how much offsite storage you need.

With either method, backups can be scheduled to happen automatically, when files or entire folders you select are monitored for change and are backed up without your involvement. Sometimes a combination of backup methods works best, and an appropriate schedule can be set up to get the best balance of cost and data security.

Vendors to Watch

You can have a vendor like Bellacom build your own onsite storage solution for you (which is often cheaper) — or go with a packaged product from providers like:

- Barracuda
- Computer Associates

Some good offsite backup vendors are:

- Symantec
- IBackup

BACKUP BY THE NUMBERS:

2,000: the number of laptops lost or stolen every day

32%: percentage of data loss caused by human error

$1,500: average cost to recover data from a crashed hard drive

15: seconds before the next hard drive crash in the US

60%: proportion of SMBs that close down within 6 months of a major data loss