

Data backup

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Backups can be your ultimate systems safety net. With a good backup you can recover from any accidental (or not so accidental) data loss,



DATA BACKUP GUIDELINES

virus incident, or critical hardware failure. And while all backups are created, good backups are also managed, maintained and secured. It is a difference realized through reasonable management practices. Whether you choose to backup to tape, disk, CD, or other medium. Without effective backup practices, you will not be able to guarantee that your safety net will be available when it may be most needed.

Determine what you will backup - data, applications or both. Your first step is to identify and quantify the data for backup. This will help you determine an appropriate backup schedule and will also define your storage requirements. For example, you may not have the storage capacity to backup all data and applications on a daily basis. As a result, you may need to define exclusions and exceptions, and then let everyone know what will be backed up, and when.

Business Data

Memos, documents, customer information, financial records, databases, accounting information, project data, schedules and appointments, e-mail, and any other critical files are there in business data.

Systems Data

Software and hardware configuration data, software applications, user ids, access rights, directory structures, passwords, e-mail configurations, and any other specialized systems information are classified as system data.

Why do I need to backup?

- To protect my business from data loss due to systems failure, virus, vandalism, operator error, or accidental erasure.
- To meet regulatory requirements.
- To free storage space.
- To archive older files.
- To prepare for a systems upgrade, conversion, or replacement.

Consider the medium

What medium will you use for backups (i.e. tape, disk to disk, CD)? Medium should be examined for capacity, cost, performance, and shelf life (i.e. how long can it be stored and how often can it be re-used?)

Document responsibilities

Assign and document responsibilities and accountability. Make sure that all staff are aware of backup policies, procedures and schedules. Even if not directly responsible for the creation of backups, anyone creating data has a stake in backing it up. Your staff should have access to information concerning file storage and related backup policies and schedules.

How often do I need to backup?

Daily – for data that changes on a daily basis

As per an established schedule – for data that changes at scheduled intervals, or to respond to a major systems event.

At month and year end – for systems with closing dates.

Label all backup medium

Backup labels should include both physical and systems labels. It is best to use a simple, but meaningful system so that you can easily locate data for retrieval. Store backups in a secured location.

At least minimum, backups should be stored in fire proof cabinet, as they will do you little good if they are lost in an office fire, along with all your desktops and servers. You may also want to consider your needs for off-site storage. While offering additional protection and security, there will also be additional costs and retrieval complications.