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## Data Backup Strategies - Protecting Critical Business Information

There's nothing worse than that "sinking feeling" when your system won't function due to a hard drive crash or when you realize that a virus infection has destroyed some of all of the data on your hard drive. Rebuilding accounting, customer contacts, bids and proposals, documents and multimedia files and take days - even weeks - to recover and/or rebuild. It's obvious that having a data backup strategy is important, the question for most is how to do it simply, quickly and cost effectively.

There are a number of data backup strategies for home-based business owners to choose from. They employ a variety of hardware, software, combinations of hardware and software technologies as well as network-based off-site services. Any one of these strategies is will protect your data. Before you choose one however, you should first think about:

- *What or how much data do you plan on protecting?* - Do you need/want to protect everything on your hard drive or on multiple hard drives and systems - including programs and boot data - in effect, "cloning" your system configurations, applications and data? Or will protecting just application data suffice (you'll have to reload programs and the operating system should a hard drive failure occur).
- *Do you travel and use a notebook or tablet computer as your primary system?* - if you are "on the road" a lot, what happens if your hard drive fails on the road? Will you still need access to your backed-up data to interact with customers and business partners?
- *Is your system physically secure (even from your family!)?* - If it isn't, have you thought about finding a secure, backup "home" for your business data?
- *How disciplined are you about performing backups?* - Hourly? Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Never? Do you need "help" to make sure that you keep up with backing up your data?
- *What's your budget?* - Always a consideration, but we don't think you should "scrimp" when it comes to making sure that your data is recoverable should something "bad" occur.
- *Does your business employ multiple, networked systems?* - If so, do you use them for separate tasks, businesses, applications? How do you plan to keep each system backed up? Or, if you just have a laptop for on the road and a desktop at home, how are you keeping your data "in synch"?

Once you know what you have in place (systems and peripherals), what/how much you need/want to protect, how often you need to update that protection and how much you're willing to pay, then you need to consider how you're going to keep your data safe. In the following table we've attempted to provide a "snapshot" of the products and services you can use as well as the tasks for which they are best suited and the costs you should expect to incur to purchase or use them. Remember that there is more than one way to approach keeping your data/system backed up and that a combination of one or more products/services may be necessary to meet your business protection needs if you rely on your system for most or all of your revenue (writers, desktop publishers, web designers, consultants, engineers, etc.).

Backup Technology/Product/Service	Capacity	Best For	Expect to Pay
Zip Drive (includes Iomega Automated Backup Software)	100M, 250M, 750M	Data, Image File Backup	Drive - \$80.00 to \$200.00 100M disc - \$10.00 250M disc - \$12.50 750M disc - \$15.00
USB Flash Memory Key/Drive	64M to 4GB	Data, Image, File Backup	\$30 (64M) to \$2,000 (4GB) depending upon drive capacity
CD (CD burning software is often included with CD-RW drives. However, make sure it is included with your drive. If it isn't you'll have to acquire "burning" software which costs an average of around \$50.00.)	650M or more depending upon format	Data, Image, Video, File Backup	CD-Rewritable drive - \$50 (internal) to \$300 (external) depending upon speed, software included and configuration CD media - \$3.00/CD
DVD (DVD burning software is often included with DVD-RW drives. However, make sure it is included with your drive. If it isn't you'll have to acquire "burning" software which costs an average of around \$90-\$100.)	2.4 to 15.9G depending upon format	Data, Image, Video, File Backup	DVD-RW drive - \$250.00 (internal) to \$500.00 (external) depending upon speed, software included and configuration DVD media - \$10/DVD
Tape (for the professional only!)	100GB to Terabytes	System Backup	Tape Drives (capacity, speed, and connectivity dependent) - \$900 to \$20,000 Tape - \$50 to \$500 per cartridge (capacity and format dependent)
Secondary Hard Drive (Some secondary hard drives come with automated backup software - i.e. Dantz Retrospect and "one touch" backup buttons on the drive - Maxtor, Western Digital, others.)	20 to 250GB	System Backup	Hard Drive (external, capacity and connectivity dependent) - \$120 to \$500+
Network Attached Storage (Connected to your home LAN via Ethernet. Some NAS drives come with automated backup software - i.e. Dantz Retrospect.)	120GB to 3 Terabytes	System Backup	NAS device (external, capacity and connectivity dependent) - \$300 to \$15,000
Automated Backup Software	N/A	System, Drive, Folder or File Backup	Free (with drives), \$150.00 to \$300.00 depending upon features/functions
Synchronizing Software (includes remote control and other capabilities - leading products are LapLink and PCAnywhere)	N/A	System, Drive, Folder or File	\$110.00 to \$200.00
Offsite Backup Service (often includes specialized backup soft-	Whatever you're willing to pay for	Most often Data, Image, File Backup	100MB - \$5 to \$20/month 500MB - \$10 to \$50/month

Backing up your data should be "automatic". If you don't have a plan/method in place, it's time you review your business needs and budget then decide on the products and/or services you'll need to make it happen. Remember that backing up your data is like a purchasing house or auto insurance. You won't know how important it REALLY is until the "worst" happens.