

Backup your Data

I hear it practically daily; am I going to lose my stuff? So many people are worried about losing their data, yet so few actually back it up. Many people view backing up data as a big chore, right up there with taking out the garbage. This is one chore though that must be completed on a regular basis, because if you don't, like piled up trash, it will really stink if you need to restore your data. The good news is there are many more ways to backup your data than there use to be, all of which are easier than the traditional tape backup.

If your company has tons of data few backup methods are more efficient than a tape drive. Tape drives come in many more flavors than can be described in this article. The general idea is the same. The only distinguishing characteristics have to do with backup size and speed. For the truly large data backup jobs, equipment exists that will automatically switch out tapes so that you can span large amounts of data across several backup tapes without human interaction.

Most small business and individuals don't need this type of backup volume. In fact I think many of you would be surprised at how little actual data there is on your hard drive. Many people think that because they have a 40 gig hard drive that they need a backup device that will handle that size. However, if you looked at this information more closely you would find that the bulk of the space is being taken up by programs. Programs that you probably already have the original CD's for anyway. Typically I suggest people concentrate only on their data.

Data is the information you created or saved to your computer. Some examples of data include documents you write in your word processor, pictures you took with your camera, or music you downloaded from the web. Most people that don't download pictures or music generally have a very small amount of data measured in mega-bytes. Pictures and music on the other hand can consume many gigs of drive space.

When backing up documents and other smaller amounts of information, a user has many options. Good old fashioned 1.4 meg 3.5 inch floppy disks are a good alternative for a couple of dozen smaller documents. A newer technology out on the market is a USB pen drive. These are small devices that plug into a USB port and act like a removable hard drive. Sizes are available from 64 Meg to 512 Meg and are a good value as well. A 128 Meg model costs about \$20 and will hold the equivalent of 100 floppies.

For users that need to backup large amounts of music or picture files CDRW, DVDRW, or External Hard drives make inexpensive backup devices. CDRW drives can hold 700 Megs of information and are very inexpensive to use. DVDRW drives don't cost much more than a CDRW drives and can hold a whopping 8.5 gigs of information. A new backup device on the market is an external hard drive. These external drives come in sizes as large as 250 gig and connect via high speed USB 2.0 or fire-wire connections. External hard drives can cost at little as \$159 and come with software that can be set up to automatically backup your data.

The bottom line is it does not matter what backup method you use. Just use some sort of backup device. Also, one last hint, be sure you test your backup method once it is set up. There is no worse feeling than realizing that your backup device has not been doing its job. If you need help designing your backup solution call Thomas or Roger or Scott at the Computer Depot, 947-0749, or email Thomas at sales@computerdepotonline.com