



Offsite Storage

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Backing up your data is a vital task for every business. If your organization hasn't done so already, draw up a data recovery plan without delay, otherwise your data is vulnerable, and your business, in jeopardy. If your data suffers a serious virus attack or other unexpected and unfortunate event, you may risk losing your important data forever. This scenario is easily rectified when you have a proper backup strategy in place. Be mindful, however, that there are occasions when the solution of simply restoring from the backup is not an option.

Picture this: The air conditioners in your office malfunction over the weekend and your business servers overheat. Eventually, a fire starts and your computers, drives, and tape backup that were stored in the same location are unsalvageable due to the extreme heat, even by professional recovery services. Irreplaceable data is lost and there is nothing that can be done to retrieve it. An event such as this is completely unforeseen, but its consequence - data loss, is very much preventable. The solution is offsite data storage.

There are three principle ways in which you can store your data offsite: backing up to external media and storing that media in a different location; backing up to an offsite server; or using professional electronic vaulting services.

Offsite Backup to External Media

Backing up your data files using backup software onto external media (for example tapes), then storing that media offsite, is safer than storing backups onsite, but it has some significant disadvantages. It's inconvenient and there will be a time lag between backing up the data, and transporting the media to its offsite location. This delay creates a window of opportunity for potential data loss.

Even if you have managed to find an efficient way of delivering your backups offsite and this method is appropriate to your computer usage, data recovery time would be negatively affected and inevitably labor intensive. Staff would need to travel to the offsite storage location and physically retrieve the required media before transporting that back to the main site. If tape backup is used the process would take some additional time for the data transfer and restoration of files to take place, which would result in more expense to the business and the potential of revenue loss increases in line with how long the recovery process takes.

Offsite Server Backup

The second method of storing your backups offsite, which is far more efficient, is to backup your data files to a server that is kept in a different location. In cases of data loss, restoration time can be kept to a minimum and is less labor intensive compared to the first option. This method does, however, have related security issues. Any data transmitted may need to be encrypted before the backup process, depending on the sensitivity of the information.

Offsite Electronic Vaulting

The most convenient method of backing up your data files directly to an offsite storage facility may be via electronic vaulting. This requires hiring the services of a professional company to handle the tedious task of tape changing and eliminating the need to transport tapes to an offsite storage facility. This method can also ensure greater security as the electronic vaulting company will provide a secure local facility. Of course, convenience and security come with a price. Electronic vaulting services cost around \$30,000 per month at 2007 prices, which can be a hefty price for small and medium sized businesses. Balanced against this is the potential loss of revenue due to data loss which may cost a business tens of thousands of dollars, or worse, compromise the running of the business so badly as to cause its demise.

As always, it is important to choose an option that suits your business and financial situation, but it is imperative that your business has an effective and efficient data recovery plan that covers all possible situations. Offsite storage should be part of that recovery plan.

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