

Wrestling with Computers: Backup Before it's Too Late.

A power surge. A computer crash. A stolen laptop. Any of these situations could lead to a loss of data. 'Data' is just a fancy name for all the stuff on your computer you would really miss if you lost it.

It's usually stored on your hard drive. As long as your hard drive is healthy and in your possession your data is safe. We all know mechanical things eventually break, the weather can wreak havoc on your equipment, and dishonest people do exist

But thankfully, there's one simple, proactive thing you can do to prevent a loss of data.

You must back-up your hard-drive as often as possible. For instance, if you backup on a Monday and do not backup again until Friday, the important 20 page research paper you did on Wednesday, the picture of your son winning the big game Tuesday, your QuickBooks input for the week and all your E-Mail for the week is gone, vanished into thin air.

A recent Harris Interactive poll found that 35 percent of consumers neglect to make backup copies of content stored on their computers. Sixty-five percent of small business owners agreed that backing up data in the event of a disaster is very important.

People do not realize how important backup is until they lose data. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) found that 50% of businesses that lost data from a disaster and didn't have a data recovery plan filed for bankruptcy right away. In addition, 93% of companies that lost their data for 10 days went bankrupt within a year. Even computers for the homeowner contain data that if lost would be irreplaceable.

There are companies that retrieve lost data from damaged hard drives but, they are very expensive. It's much cheaper to be proactive and backup your data yourself. If a computer has a good recent backup and the system crashes, you could be back in business in about an hour with a new computer.

Recreating a document, database or excel sheet could take days. Precious photos could be lost forever, and your e-mail is gone. So back up as often as possible – at least weekly, if not daily

Next, where you send your backup is as important as how often. Back up can be done to a CD, another hard drive, a zip drive or offsite. A backup is a second copy of your data. In my opinion the best backup tool to use is an external USB drive. For even more protection use two USB drives that you can alternate and store one drive in a different

location. The best part of this method is that if you have a crash, you can take the External drive and plug it into any other computer and access your data.

External USB drives are fairly inexpensive (a Western Digital 500GB My Book™ Essential Edition™ 2.0 External is around \$100).

You can also backup onto CDs and DVDs. But they have limited space (a 80 min CD holds 700 megabytes B and a DVD holds 8.54 gigabytes).

One of the new backup solutions is the online backup. Prices are becoming more affordable (www.carbonite.com is about \$50/ year). The problem here is you need to be online for it to work and you need to trust your Internet Service Provider i.e. Comcast or Verizon.

Now that you have a place to backup, you need something to do the backup for you. DO NOT trust yourself to back stuff up. We all get busy and it could easily slip your mind. Fortunately, backup software is not that expensive

I like Memeo (www.memeo.com about \$50). This program backs up as you go. It backs up changes automatically. You decide what to backup and let it go. PC magazine likes Genie Backup Manager Pro 8.0 (www.genie-soft.com about \$70). This program will backup data at a scheduled time. Both these programs will backup your data to a USB drive or any other drive. Simply follow the directions for installing the program on your computer.

The things to remember about backup;

- Organize your data so that you know what to backup.
- Backup to an external USB drive, which are inexpensive and independent.
- Use software to schedule the backup. You should not be the backup.
- Backup often, daily at least. If your computer crashes you will lose everything that you did after your last backup.

If you need assistance in setting up a backup system or any computer/technology problems or questions please do not hesitate to call Brewster PC Solutions @508-746-6423 or e-mail me at wbrewster@brewsterPCsolutions.com.