

## ***Warning!!! You could be in danger of losing your data!!***

How would you feel if you lost all your cherished family photos? Or all the work you have done in the past few weeks or months? If you don't backup your computer on a regular basis, you are in danger of losing your irreplaceable data.

Backing up your data is an important part of computer maintenance. Most users don't realize that hard disk failure is not all that unusual. In fact, Google recently conducted a study which found that 1 out of 14 drives 2 years or older will fail within a year. If a virus infects your computer it can destroy vital data or make it inaccessible. Program malfunctions and computer crashes, which are not uncommon, can also cause data loss. If you have photos, videos, music, email or important documents that are irreplaceable, you should do regular backups to ensure you don't lose these files.

### **Your data may actually be worth more than your PC!**

I learned my lesson the hard way. One morning, I tried to power up my home computer, and it would not boot up. The monitor was black with the words "Can't locate disk drive". I kept hearing a "clicking sound" coming from the drive. The worst of the worst happened - my hard disk had crashed. We could not recover the data by the usual methods. The drive itself was damaged and it would cost over \$1,800 dollars to recover the data, if it was even recoverable at all. My last backup was over 3 months old. I had to decide what that lost data was worth to me. In the end, I decided to restore the data from the 3-month-old backup. I lost all the photos, email & documents I had stored on my computer during the previous 3 months. It was a painful lesson to learn.

### ***Where should you backup your computer?***

The reason for doing a backup is to protect your data from drive failure or some other problem that makes your data inaccessible from your system. Therefore all backups should be on some sort of external media or network. Here are some of the various media used for backups:

**USB Flash Drives** (thumb drives): The capacity of these drives range from 1GB to 128 GB, and the price ranges from \$8 to \$400. They are small, portable, and easy to use. Their main drawback is that they are also easy to misplace or lose.

**CD-R and DVD-R:** The capacity of the CD-R is 650 MB. DVD-R can hold 4.7 GB (single-layer) or 8.5 GB (double-layer). This type of media is OK for small amounts of data. But with the prevalence of storing pictures and music, this may not be enough space.

**External Hard Drives:** Nowadays you can get a good size (100 GB - 1 TB) External USB or Firewire hard drive for a reasonable price. This makes an external hard drive an easy and affordable choice for backing up your computer.

**Remote Backup:** For a monthly or yearly fee, you can use an online backup provider to store your files remotely. The price of the service is usually based on the amount of data being backed up. One advantage of online backup is that your data is stored offsite. One disadvantage: since you are backing up over the Internet, depending on the amount of data, the backup and recovery speeds can be slow.

### ***Common Backup Methods***

**Drag-and-Drop:** The drag-and-drop method is a very simple way to save your files. With this method of backup you just copy individual directories and/or files that you want to save to your backup media. Since this is not automated, you have to remember to backup your files. You must also be sure that all the files you need to save are stored in the files and directories that you copy. With backup software, you can automate this process, but must be sure to save your important files in the directories tagged for backup.

**Full Backups:** Use backup software to copy all files on your hard drive. This is the most complete type of

backup, but takes the most time and space. With the right backup software and storage media, you can automate this process to be performed on a regular basis.

**Full & Incremental Backup:** With an incremental backup you would copy only those files that have changed since your last backup. Full backups would be performed weekly or monthly, with incremental backup being performed more frequently. This method of backup can also be automated.

The method of backup that is best for you depends on what is important to you in terms of time, cost of media, and ease of recovery. How often you should backup also depends on your situation. For casual computer users the answer might be once a month. For most home computer users a weekly backup should keep most of their data safe. Business users might want to perform daily backups.

## ***Test your Backup***

You must periodically test your backup to make sure your data can be read and that all your important files are included. There are many things that can go wrong with a backup. You don't want to find out your backup is unreadable or that important files are missing **after** your hard disk has crashed and files have been lost.

## ***WebDispatch.com can assist you***

If you need assistance in setting up and testing your backups, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be happy to assist you in choosing, configuring, and testing the best backup solution for your situation. If you already have a backup solution in place, bring it into the shop during the month of February and we will give you a FREE checkup to verify that your backups are working properly.