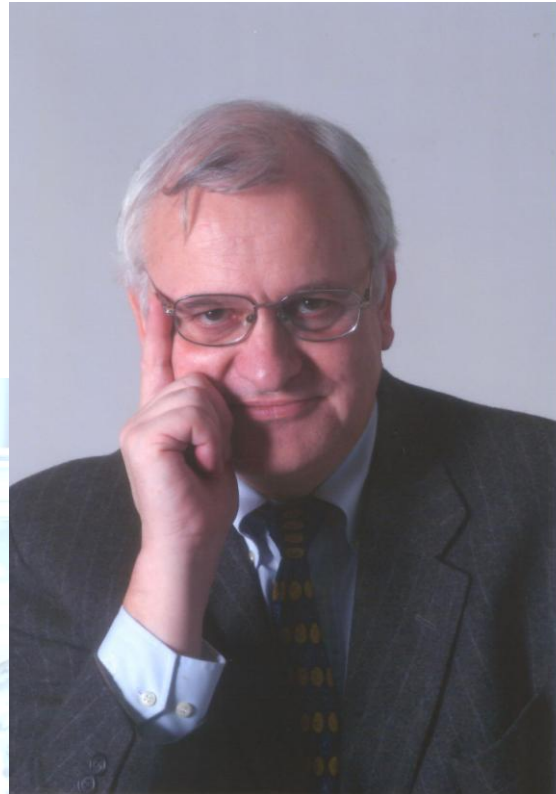


This article was originally published in the Newbury Weekly News Business Review in May 2007.

ITMatters

In this regular column Charles Zealey of ITSolve covers all aspects of business and personal computing. If you have a question about IT matters, email it to Charles at itmatters@itsolve.co.uk



Backing Up

A disk is at the heart of the modern computer – we looked last month at the ability of the disk to store vast amounts of information and give access to it very quickly. We also saw some of the weaknesses and limitations of disks. This leads us to the need for backup.

Principles

The principles of backup are essentially the same whether we are talking about a PC used by one person for small amounts of email and word processing to an enterprise scale network with thousands of users and complex databases:

- In the event of a failure of any one component information stored of the system should be capable of being restored
- In the event of an unwanted change to information (or deletion) it should be possible to restore that information to some state in the past.
- Copies of information should be store in physically separate locations.

In practice it is difficult if not impossible to achieve these objectives – but they are a good aiming point when we consider how to implement a practical backup solution.

It worked!

A few years back I used a system which served me well for a number of years. Each evening I would copy all my working documents to a floppy disk (it was a few years ago!) and take it home with me. At the end of the month I would label the disk with the month and keep it in a box at home; then I would use a new disk for the next month.

By this system I could be sure that I would never loose more that one day's work, and if I needed a file from the past I could access it from the archived floppy disk. You could easily implement a simple system like that today using USB memory sticks.

Changing the name

Another technique that has helped me in the past when working on a large document – a report or plan perhaps – is to store the document at relatively frequent intervals with a new name. You could add a number which you increment each hour when you save

the document. That way, if anything occurs during the editing process – perhaps you deleted a large passage by mistake – you can go back to the previous version and recover.

In the shadows

If you are running a larger system involving a number of users and a server the principles above still apply. Shadow copy facilities can help a great deal, but you need a combination of backup strategies to achieve the main objective.

Small Steps

As with many things, taking a step forward is much more important than getting it completely right in one go. What is your backup strategy? What small step can you take to improve it today?

Charles Zealey is a consultant working with business professionals helping them to improve their organisation's productivity and effectiveness with the use of Information Technology. Typically a return on investment can be achieved with 6-12 months. To access help sheets go to www.itsolve.co.uk/HelpSheets/. For a free half-hour consultation on business IT issues phone 01635 869863 or email lisa@itsolve.co.uk.

This article is © Copyright ITSolve Ltd 2006-8. All rights reserved. You may copy or distribute this article in full as long as this copyright statement and full information about contacting the author is preserved. The author is Charles Zealey, ITSolve Ltd., charles@itsolve.co.uk. Telephone : 01635 869863.

To subscribe to our newsletter, IT in Focus, email subscribe-it-in-focus@itsolve.co.uk. To 'unsubscribe' email unsubscribe-it-in-focus@itsolve.co.uk using the same email address as that from which you originally subscribed.

We keep our subscriber list in confidential. Whilst we aim to ensure that all out-going mail is scanned for viruses we recommend that you ensure that you are fully protected against all forms of malware attack. We only send our general bulletins to those we understand have given their express permission to receive them. ITSolve Ltd never release, sell or give a subscriber's e-mail address to any party outside of the organisation, except when referring business between individual subscribers. Our subscribers only receive email messages that contain requested information, new monthly articles or announcements of new services.