

BORING BACKUPS

At some time or other most of us have known that sinking feels that comes when hours of work are lost because of a failed disk or corrupted file. Generally networks have a back-up system, but do you know how your company's works? Or if you're not on a network, do you back-up at all? Many of us don't, but our time is valuable, and many hours - or even irreplaceable records or files - can be lost for the sake of a few minutes backing things up.

Four simple steps

However large or small your use of computers, there are four simple steps to make sure you have a secure and easy-to-use backup plan.

Step one

Identify the files and information you need to back up. To simplify things, why not keep important data in one place, for example in a folder named "data" or "work", and backup that location? In Windows XP or 2000 you might backup the folder called "Documents and Settings". Don't forget to save all the things you need - including email addresses and messages, contacts, internet favourites and any data associated with special programs you might use.

Step two

Choose an appropriate media for your backups: Rewritable CD or DVD, floppy disk (possibly), tape, removable hard disk. Your supplier can advise you here.

Step three

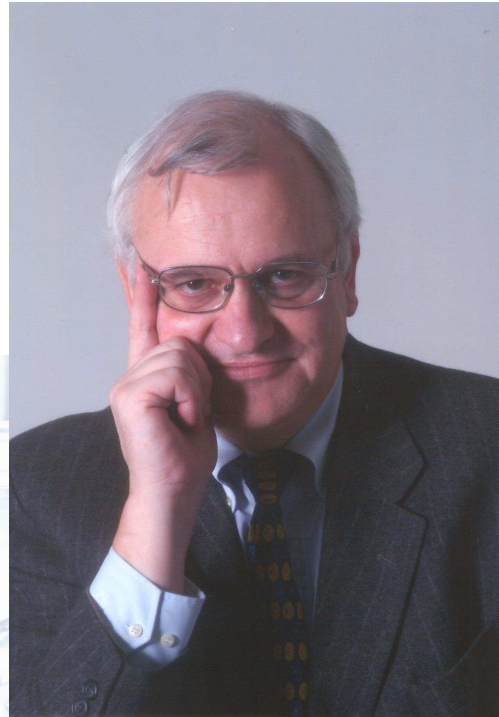
Establish a regular routine for backup, and always do your backup whether you think you need to or not. Backup as regularly as you need to; and to decide how often that is, ask yourself how you would feel if you had to start again from when you last took a backup.

Step four

Keep your backups in a different location in case of fire or theft, but think about security too. Treat your backups with the same degree of care as your main data store, and be aware of the data protection act in relation to personal data. Check periodically that you can actually recover data from your backup.

Occasional use of programmes such as Norton Ghost or IBM's Rapid Restore will take an 'image' of your disk including all the system settings, as well as your data. Acronis TrueImage, in conjunction with a second disk, provides a powerful way of backing up your working disk.

If you are responsible for a network of computers the problem will be more complex but the same basic principles apply.



Free help sheet

For a free backup help sheet email itmatters@itsolve.co.uk stating whether your interest is in personal or network backup.

Handy Hint

To make a quick table in Excel, enter the values you want (for example, the dates of two consecutive Fridays) in two adjacent cells and then select the cells and drag the bottom right hand corner. This extends the values into further cells, giving, in this example, column headings of weekend dates.

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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.

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