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Data Backup isn't as Simple as You May Think

The protection of your business includes many facets. Physical security, training, and network security get most of the attention (and rightfully so), but does your business have a plan in place if those strategies fail? For the growing business, understanding that your data is an asset doesn't have to come after you lose some. If your management team prides itself on taking proactive measures to keep business running smoothly, one element that has to be on the table is the practice of data backup and recovery.

Most small businesses do all they can to compete with larger companies. Some can, some can't. There's only one certainty, problems that other businesses have dealt with have to be considered before they cause problems for your business. Since data backup is a pretty straightforward process, you'd think that you could buy a backup system, set it, and if something goes wrong and your organization loses data, the data will be protected. Unfortunately, it isn't that simple. To properly protect your business, you'll need a plan in place to preserve, and if need be, fully restore your data. Here are four important considerations you should make when dealing with data protection.

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Create Envelopes For Your Whole Contact List With Word

Microsoft Office has many capabilities that aren't fully utilized by the majority of their

users. Mail merges in Word used to be a time consuming, frustrating process. With each new edition of Word, Microsoft has...



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4 Tips That Can Help Your Business Better Manage IT Projects

Have you ever tried to manage a major IT project yourself? If you have, you know that it's a huge time sink and that there's a lot involved with the process. We'll discuss four of the best ways that you can save time and resources while managing your latest technology implementation project.

Understand the Needs of Your Organization

What does the project do for your business? For example, are you implementing a new infrastructure design that makes data more easily accessed by your users? Maybe you found a better email system that you want to use over your old one. Or, maybe you understand that the cloud is the future of your business and you need to migrate all of your data. Whatever the project is, make sure that you know exactly what you hope to gain from it.

You want to ask yourself how the change benefits anyone else involved, too. Will it help your employees better fulfill their duties? Will it make your services more readily accessible to anyone who buys from you? Basically, you need to understand if it's something that will be mutually beneficial for everyone involved. If it's not, then why are you doing it in the first place?

Budget for Unexpected Circumstances

When you're implementing a project, you have to follow the guidelines stated in the project's budget. However, this isn't always possible, as unexpected circumstances would lead you to repeat certain tasks, which naturally leads to wasted assets and wasted time. Furthermore, changes in the price of resources and labor could affect the timeline of a project. Suppliers may not be able to meet obligations, or prices may skyrocket to break your budget.

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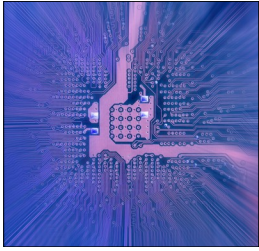
About Directive

We are a technology consulting firm specializing in technology implementation and management for businesses. We're known for providing big-business, Enterprise-Level IT services to small and medium-sized businesses.

Visit us online at:

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Here's How We Help You Avoid Tech Trouble



Wouldn't it be great to have a fully-trained and certified staff of IT professionals sitting in the corner of your office, keeping your technology in line? Unfortunately, small businesses often don't have the budget required to hire an internal IT department filled with security analysts and network technicians. Even if they do, they don't have the workforce to handle all of the responsibilities of a full IT department. What's the best way to handle your organization's IT?

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What's the best way to handle your organization's IT?

Two words: outsourced IT. By outsourcing your business's technology management needs, you can effectively eliminate the burden placed on your organization's employees and help them be more productive.

Network Assessment

First thing's first--you need a network assessment before you can know how to improve the way you do business. A network assessment is designed to identify flaws in your current infrastructure, ranging from traffic bottlenecks to security flaws. It's best that a third party handle this responsibility so that it can be assessed with a clear, unclouded view.

Remote Network Monitoring

Implementing preventative solutions will only get you so far. You need to actively monitor your business' network so as to make sure that threats stay out as soon as possible. This is what remote network monitoring is for. An outsourced IT provider like Directive can monitor your network in real time, ensuring that any

issues related to security or operations are resolved in a timely manner.

Security (Firewall, Antivirus, Spam Filter)

Security is one of those things that includes so many details that it can be difficult to prepare for every situation--especially if you're not particularly familiar with cyber security and its threats. There are all sorts of threats that you have to worry about, including viruses, malware, ransomware, Trojans, spyware, and so much more that can cause trouble for your business. The best way to protect your business is through preventative measures like a firewall, antivirus, spam blocking, and content filtering. We can arm your business with these powerful solutions so that you never have to worry about online threats again.

At the end of the day, managed IT is meant to help your business focus on what matters most: running your business.



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4 Tips That Can Help Your Business Better Manage IT Projects

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Basically, you should ask yourself what could go wrong when you begin implementing a new IT solution, and ensure that time is allowed just in case something happens which is out of your control. If you do this, the worst-case scenario is that your project is completed on-time and on-budget. If it's finished as intended, however, you have a lot of extra time and capital to spend on other tasks following the implementation.

Find Ways to Judge Success

Key performance indicators should be a well-known part of your project implementation process. KPIs are what show how well your process works, and they can make or break the project implementation process in both the present and future. If you keep track of metrics like these, you can use them for

future projects to make changes accordingly. Here are some of the KPIs that you should consider.

- Actual cost
- Cost Variance
- Earned Value
- Planned Value
- Return on Investment

Keep Everyone Informed

A project management team is generally made up of highly-skilled, specialized workers who are working together toward a common goal. Anyone involved in the project management process needs to stay in touch with the progress being made toward that goal so as to make sure that tasks aren't done more than once. Most importantly, though, is that it's important these tasks get completed properly so that they don't

need to be done more than once.

You can keep track of all tasks and resources assigned to a project through the implementation of project management software. It creates a single point of contact for all resources involved so that they can keep track of all progress made. It's just one of the ways that project management solutions can help you keep your projects on-track and on-budget.

All of this might sound like a bit much, which is why we recommend that you go through an outsourced IT provider like Directive for your IT project management needs.



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Firewalls

Your firewalls, both hardware and software, are there for a reason: to safeguard your business. They keep threats from entering your network. Be cognizant of the presence and status of your firewalls, and remember that they need to be monitored and maintained like any other piece of your network infrastructure.

Antivirus

One major reason backups need to be accessed in the first place is when files get corrupted by malware. Your backup strategy has to start here. If you don't have a centrally managed antivirus in place, it is important that you get one. Creating reasonable procedures to ensure that your backup system is your last measure is as important as having data backup in the first place.

Backup Trials

The thought behind your backup and recovery system must be more than just taking for granted the system will work on command. You wouldn't put in a new accounting system for your business without knowing whether it is going to work for you or not. The same can be said about your backup and recovery system. Test your backups frequently to ensure that the system is working in the manner you need it to, because if a real-world data loss situation were to present itself, you wouldn't want to depend on a system that is in place, but not functional. Again, test your backup!

Leverage Automation

By automating your backup system, you remove the risk and uncertainty of depending on people. People make a business run, but how many times during the course of business has something not

got done when it was supposed to get done? Business owners and managers that understand that data can be lost as a result of human error, have to understand that backups can be neglected for the same reason. With automation, backups run at specific times to collect predefined information, and mitigate the downtime that is often prevalent with some backup solutions.

Your backup and recovery strategy has to be more than just your backup system. It should include understanding how to eliminate data loss, protect your systems from harm, and that redundancy is there as a last resort. For more information about backup, recovery, automation, and network security, call us today at 607.433.2200.



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What Happens to Your Data When You Delete It? The Truth will Surprise You



When you delete a file off your PC, or your hard drive becomes corrupted, you just take for granted that the data is

gone in perpetuity. That isn't the case at all, and it can present problems for businesses and individuals alike. The thing is that it's deleted, it's gone, it ceases to exist, because you deleted it with your own hands.

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However, depending on the method of deletion, your files may still be intact and ready for a hacker to steal. We'll walk you through what happens when

you delete a file so that you're more aware of the way your computer stores data on its hard drive or network.

Deleting a File

When you delete a file from your computer, it will be moved to your Recycle Bin. You might think that the files are gone forever, but that's absolutely not the case. The only thing that changes is the location of the file. You can still open it and everything included with it is intact. Even deleting the file from the Recycle Bin isn't going to be enough.

Deleting the file simply eliminates the file's link to a name. After this, the space once held by the file is labeled as "free," but it's not overwritten.

The file data is still available, but since it's marked as free by the system, it can be overwritten and used to store other files. The data from your previous files won't be truly gone until you replace it with other data--which, if you're using a large amount of storage, will take a long time to fill up. The reason for this is simple: you don't want to ever be anywhere

close to maxing out your available data storage.

What About Cloud Storage?

Let's say that you use Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive for your data storage needs. What happens when you delete a file from your account's drive? You might wonder if the cloud provider stores information that you delete behind your back. Well, the truth is that these cloud providers do keep your deleted files for a few days after the initial deletion, mostly just in case you have made a mistake and need to correct it. After that, if you are a consumer-grade cloud customer, you're likely out of luck for getting any deleted data back.

Business cloud storage solutions are another story altogether, though. If you are a business customer of any notable cloud provider, it's likely that your deleted data will be stored for as long as you would like it to be--assuming you want...



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Directive Employee Spotlight: Shannon Gregory



Here at Directive, we have plenty of wonderful people that deserve celebration. This month, we're celebrating one of our web designers and project managers, Shannon Gregory!

Shannon was raised in Otego, New York, and attended SUNY Albany. She graduated with not only a bachelor's degree in Information Science and Policy, but also a minor in

Business. Life had taken her all the way to Florida before she decided to move back to her hometown area. While looking for a job, she found Directive online. She applied here first, as the position was a perfect match to her skill set, and the rest is history! When not in the office, Shannon pursues a variety of hobbies, hiking, fishing, and traveling, as well as photography and design work.

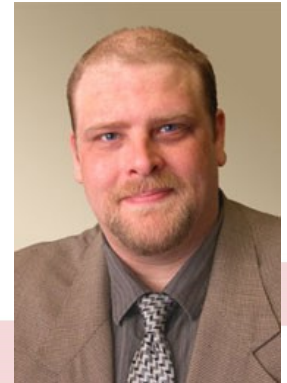
She often reads the news online, frequenting Yahoo, MSN, and Mashable to hear the latest. She also likes to write--not only does Shannon have experience writing for a newspaper column, she also has a few books started. One day, she wants to buy a house to share with her pets: cats,

Lucky and Nummy, and dog, Doc.

Shannon is very happy being a web project manager with Directive, as it allows her to incorporate her passions of design and coding into her work in a place that she found to be helpful and supportive from the very beginning. She recalls how her car broke down in the parking lot immediately after her first interview, and that, while it was embarrassing, she was so thankful that her soon-to-be Directive family helped her out.

Shannon is an integral part of our team, and we are so happy to have her here. Thank you, Shannon, for all that you are and do!

We partner with many types of businesses in the area, and strive to eliminate IT issues before they cause expensive downtime, so you can continue to drive your business forward. Our dedicated staff loves seeing our clients succeed. Your success is our success, and as you grow, we grow.



Chris Chase
Solutions Integrator

3 Steps to Successful Business Continuity Planning



By now, you've probably heard about the importance of business continuity and disaster recovery planning for small businesses. According to FEMA, more businesses have business continuity plans than ever before. With so many SMBs looking to secure their future, there are still a few aspects of business continuity

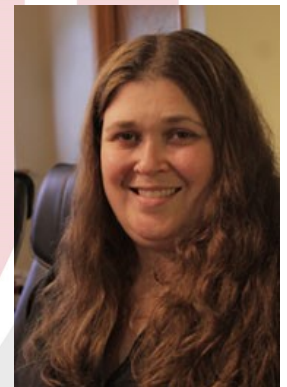
planning that today's business need to comprehend. After all, there is more to it than just data backup. Disaster recovery is something that needs to be planned, practiced and updated.

Make Sure Every Department is Represented: Many times, business continuity planning responsibilities fall to a single individual. Having someone take charge and drive the planning forward is great--but

it's important to make sure that every department is represented. As your company grows, this will become increasingly important, as the author of the plan may not be aware of the important technology needs for every department. Once everyone has their mission-critical information, processes, and...



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