



Disaster Recovery Plan

Steve Stryhalaleck

One of the great things about living in New England is the weather is great. We have the four seasons of the year. We have great foliage, great beaches, and historic cities. It is typically thought that really bad weather just does not really happen here to us.

However if we look back at the past few years Massachusetts had a major ice storm where some people did not have power for up to three weeks and school was closed for over a month. Last year parts of New England had severe flooding from the onslaught of rain, as well in the winter there was large amounts of snow so heavy that roofs collapsed. This spring Western Massachusetts had tornadoes in places that have not seen the likes of one before, and very recently the east coast was dealt heavy blows by Hurricane Irene.

Most do not like to think about these things and how they can affect businesses or personal lives. One of the most important things in your business is a disaster recovery plan, a plan that answers the "What if....."'s. Your IT infrastructure is one of the most pivotal and important pieces of that puzzle, and if

not protected correctly your recovery costs can skyrocket exponentially.



It is one thing to have a plan, but it is also important to make sure that your plan is actually going to work. With IT infrastructure this means simulating a disaster and recovering the network and any lost data so that your employees are able to work again within a reasonable amount of time.

There are also some practices that you can enable now that can easily reduce many headaches down the road. If you have an on-site backup, such as a tape or RDX drive, then make sure to have a copy of the backup offsite and that it is rotated on a regular basis. If you use an online backup, it is worth checking to see if the backup provider data center is in another section of the country and if it is replicated to multiple centers in different areas. You may pay a bit more for this service, but it

can avoid major headaches. Another item is to have uninterruptable power supplies in place for computer systems. These devices will help with protecting computers for power events, such as brown-outs, and power spikes. They will also shut your equipment down safely in the event of an extended power outage.

The use of disk mirroring technologies, such as RAID, on highly important machines such as the server is highly recommended. Make sure that the PC that hosts the most important data uses RAID technology. Other things that are important pieces are fire alarms and fire extinguishers, anti-virus protection, physical security measures, and computer security measures.

As you can see there are many important pieces that makes up a disaster recovery plan. Some pieces are more important than others but none of them should be left out in order for a plan to be successful. If you have any questions or concerns about including your computer network in your disaster recovery plan we can be reached at support@mhconsults.com or 866-9MH-TECH (964-8324).

How to know your backup is working

With any backup solution, it is important that the business take ownership of making sure their backup is working regularly and working properly. Part of that comes from test restores and maintenance, but also a part of it is checking the email notifications to make sure it ran properly. While some smaller setups (Carbonite, a simple script to copy files) don't necessarily have this functionality, most backup software will. With that in mind, here is a quick refresher on the 5 golden rules of backup notifications.

1. Know what you have. You should be aware of what your backup solution is, how often it runs, what is included, and whether you should be getting a notification.
2. Assuming you have a program that can give notifications, you should be receiving an email EVERY day that the backup runs. When you don't receive the email, it could be a small glitch, but it is more likely that there is a problem with the job and you should be alerting M&H immediately to make sure you don't go days, weeks, or even months without a successful backup.
3. While a failed or incomplete backup isn't a good thing, you do not necessarily need to contact M&H for every failed notification. Our typical recommendation is, if a backup fails, let it run again the next night. Assuming that works wait and make sure it doesn't fail the same night the next week (as that could indicate a problem with the tape). No software or hardware is perfect and it doesn't necessarily make sense to pay to have us look at every single failure when it could be a one-off hiccup with your system. Failures happening two days in a row or two weeks on the same day probably are worth making a call to M&H to have it looked into, or at least making a note so it can be looked at during your next Tech for a Day visit at the lower rate.
4. Not all notifications are created equal. Some programs, like Symantec's Backup Exec, will say exactly what you need to know in the subject line ("Job Success", "Job Failure", etc), but others might have an included log that you will actually need to review to see whether the job worked. If you are unsure of how to read notifications, ask an M&H technician and we will gladly explain it to you.
5. Monitoring the backup is the single most important job responsibility you have. Servers and computers die all of the time and not just because they are old. Files can accidentally be deleted or corrupted and the effects on a business without a working backup can be devastating. It's worthwhile to designate a second person at your office who can handle looking at notifications, rotating tapes, and alerting M&H if there is a possible problem.

-Tim Clarkin



Should I be replacing my server?

Matt Carreiro

Thinking about replacing that old server? If your server is between 4 and 6 years old or older you should be considering a replacement. In the 4 – 6 year window servers usually start to experience hardware issues like dying drives or power supplies. While these parts can be replaced they are sometimes just the beginning. At first glance in an economy like this many companies try to use their server till it dies and just replace it then. However this can be a lot more costly than they realize. If the server does go down here are some of the problems that could be faced by a company.

The first would be down time. The turnaround time to get a new server on site would be time not being able to have access to the data. Even if a replacement is ordered the same day it can take a few weeks for the server and software to come in and during that time there would be a lot of downtime.

The second thing that could be a problem is domain survivability. If the dead server is the only server on the network then it would be necessary to create

a brand new domain and add all the PCs to it to get the PCs back online. This could easily take 2 hours per PC depending on how many custom settings each PC has. All of this time would not be needed if a server is replaced while the existing server is still operational.



The last thing for a dead server is the overall cost of replacement. Replacing a server that is dead takes a lot longer than replacing a running server. Restoring data from a backup is more complicated than just moving it from one server to the other so the labor just to get the data back would be much higher plus the additional costs associated with the

above mentioned items. All this labor would add up to two or three times the cost compared to if the server was replaced while it was still operational.

Another reason for replacing an old server is speed. If employees are waiting for pages to load or files to open this could be the result of a slow server. Because software is always changing and requiring more resources with every new version that fast server that was purchased 5 years ago is no longer fast anymore because the newer software requires more resources. Depending on what a company does a little slowness might not be an issue however if a company needs its workers to have quick access to data then replacing the server should be considered.

If you are unsure what would need to be done if your server dies please contact us at M&H Consulting and a technician can help make sure you are prepared. You can reach us at 866-964-8324, or email us at support@mhconsults.com.

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