BACKUP AND DISASTER RECOVERY:
MORE THAN JUST AN IT ISSUE

A Guide for Small- and Mid-Sized Businesses

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Most organizations today would quickly grind to a halt without the key documents, data and records they rely on to conduct day-to-day business. The cloud and managed IT services have made technology a highly reliable proposition, even for smaller companies. However, just because outages have become less likely doesn't mean they can't wreak havoc on an organization that isn't adequately prepared. It's also important to remember technological infrastructure isn't the only point of failure that business owners need to consider.

Understanding the dangers of technology failure

There are good reasons why backup and disaster recovery are usually considered to fall under the purview of IT. Think about how difficult it is to do your own job when there's a problem with your smartphone, your computer, or your shared databases. Suddenly, you have to create or remember workarounds — while simultaneously trying to get your devices and data restored.

Now imagine how some or all of your organization would — or wouldn't — continue to function if hit by a larger IT outage that made your data, and possibly also the applications that create and use this data unavailable. There goes your email. Possibly also your phone system. Documents, databases, sales orders, billing, accounting, customer support, scheduling.

How much productivity would you lose for every day and hour without essential data? How many existing customers and repeat business might be put at risk due to an extended outage? How many new customers would you fail to win during the downtime? What impact could this have on your company's reputation? On its bottom line?

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In implementing backup and disaster recovery, don't neglect the applications that use the data, and the computers these run on. Standard notebook computers can provide office/web software, but you may also want a solution that can host and run your business-critical applications or provide virtualized solutions.

One key part of establishing backup and disaster recovery plans is identifying your data priorities:

Recovery Point Objective (RPO) — what parts of your data does your organization need to regain access to as quickly as possible in order to continue/resume operating? While, ideally, you don't want to lose any data, the odds are that much of your data is older, even archived, and not immediately available.

Recovery Time Objective (RTO) — how soon do you need to regain access to your RPO? Within a day? Two hours? Ten minutes? Even less?

Protecting your physical information

According to an IDC study, 58 percent of businesses still rely on paper documents for critical business processes. The most advanced IT system in the world isn't going to be helpful if your business loses the physical, hard-copy files that it needs to operate effectively.

Many of the paperwork-heavy functions within a business are also the ones that would be most disrupted by a loss of key documents. Consider, for example, what would happen if your organization were to lose all of its financial records or accounts payable/receivable documents.

In order to take advantage of an effective disaster recovery plan, everything you need to keep your organization running needs to be backed up. Fortunately, it has become simple to convert physical documents to a digital format. You can even have the conversion done for you if your people don't have the time.

Digitizing your old records provides added benefits beyond security and business continuity as well. Moving to digital workflows can help you avoid productivity-sapping processes that are slowing down your organization and frustrating your employees.

The problem with paper-based records is that they are inherently difficult to back up, and impossible to recover if they haven't been. There are a lot of things that can go wrong when a company relies on critical records that are being kept in a filing cabinet or off-site storage. Fire, theft, misfiling, water damage; any number of events can render your paper records unsalvageable. And useless.

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The non-technical side of business continuity

Responding to data loss and computer outages require more than just a technical plan.

- Do you have lists of key phone numbers, addresses, email addresses and more, for employees, outside suppliers, and important customers? Make sure you keep current copies printed out, in easily findable folders or binders.

- Do you have policies and procedures for notifying customers and partners when an incident has the possibility of impacting them directly?

- Do you have a clear plan in place for how to proceed in during an outage? Have your employees been trained on their roles?

- Have you developed a crisis communications plan that can be executed in the event of a serious or prolonged problem? What about a social media plan and customer response protocols?

Don't look at backup and disaster recovery as yet another security expense that, if you're lucky, you'll never use. In your business, these precautions may be necessary to satisfy government and industry compliance regulations. Many backup and disaster recover solutions can also be part of document management, mobility access, and collaborative distance working activity — activities your company can benefit from on a daily basis. Data loss and computer outages happen. It's crucial to prepare for the worst and manage your documents more effectively to keep your organization up and running.

And that's where we can help.

Have a question? Get an answer.

Whether you need support or just have a question, our experienced systems experts would be happy to answer your questions, help you explore your options and develop customized solutions for you. Call us toll-free 1-800-444-2943 and learn more at stratixsystems.com.

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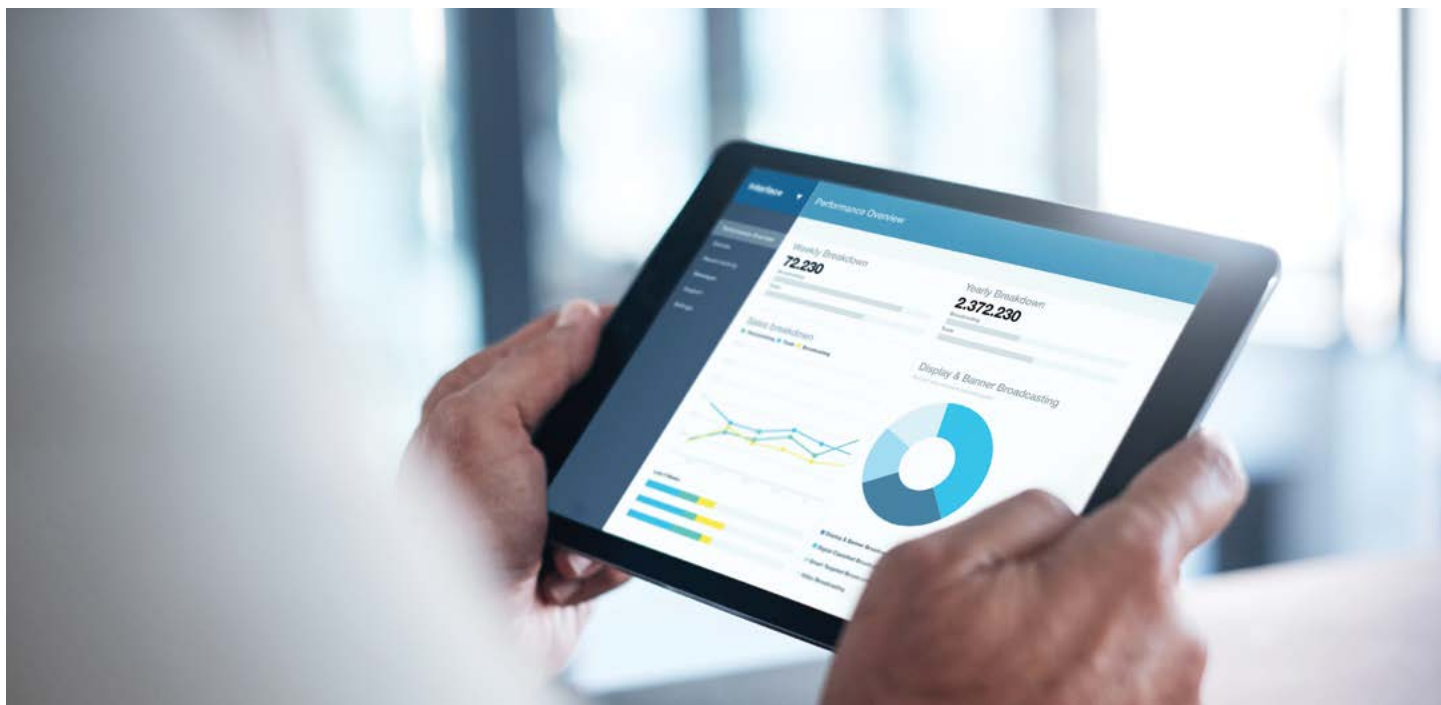
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