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Another Article on Backups!

Backup has not been cool since 2005.

Office automation is cool. ERP is cool. Even mobile accounting apps are cool. Backup is about as cool as your 8-track tape of KC and the Sunshine Band. And yet, as the

folks over at [Gillware Data Services](#) were kind enough to point out, recreating lost

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your data is the most important asset of your company — even more important than people, inventory or fixed assets. And suppose you decided you wanted to make your backups effective, painless and at the lowest possible cost.

Here's how to proceed.

1. **Automate the process.** The real reason why most companies don't backup their systems is that it can be a time-consuming process. But in this day and age, it need not be. The system can be set to automatically backup data every hour, every day or whatever frequency is needed, all with no human action required.
2. **Use an online data backup service.** The Internet has made online backups to an offsite location attractive both in terms of cost and reliability. For accounting firms, the top three vendors on my list would include Norton, Carbonite and Gillware. Of the three, Gillware is the least well known but likely the most economical. I'm sure there are others, but this is a place to start.
3. **Forget Microsoft's built-in backup.** Sadly, this is not an online solution, and you'll spend more time trying to figure out its screwy error messages than you would transcribing your data by hand. There are other, better solutions available online.
4. **Beware of complicated services.** I have three simple rules. If it stores the data in some unknown format or file type, don't do it. If it requires you to learn new tech phrases like "mounted volume" or "inconvertible kernel mode exception," don't do it. If it requires me to spend more than three minutes talking to a company rep in order to set it up, don't do it. You want a plain, simple program that copies your data files to a remote server, accessible by you (and only you) from anywhere in the world at any time.
5. **Include a hard drive recovery service in your plan.** You can't possibly cover all the places your data is stored. Mobile phone. USB keychain device. The hard drive on

your laptop at home. So find a data recovery service you can work with, at a price

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removes a copy of your data to a secure server in another building, if not another state. Second, and equally important, it provides more real-time options for frequent backups.

During tax season, some accounting firms backup every 10 minutes. Others back up every time they save a new client file to the server.

Backup isn't cool anymore, but it *is* mission-critical for the accounting firm. And it should be treated as such.

Reality Check

A compendium of ideas, products, rants and raves from the viewpoint of the author. Not that the author has no financial interests in any of the products mentioned. Feel free to disagree, or to share your ideas by sending them to dave.mcclure@cpapracticeadvisor.com.

Internet Site of the Month. Gillware. (<http://www.gillware.com>). The site for Gillware, an offsite data backup service that can also help restore data from a crashed storage device. They are not the only company in the business, but they are one of the top tier service providers. They serve primarily businesses with less than \$10 million in annual revenues.

[Thumbs Up] – **Data Recovery Software.** Top Ten Reviews has a 2011 roundup of software that can be used to recover a crashed hard drive. Note that these won't help with a mechanical failure, but will attempt a data recovery for around \$100. To see the reviews, check out <http://data-recovery-software-review.toptenreviews.com>.

[Thumbs Down] – **Free Backup Utilities.** If you simply want to backup your documents to an external USB hard drive, shouldn't there be a free utility to do this?

Yes. Does one exist? Probably, but good luck finding it. Seems like every software

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people able to access better recipes.

[Thumbs Down] – **Branded Tech Words.** At some point, when tech became all about patents and protection of trademarks, we started spewing untold thousands of new tech phrases into the air. JumpList. Datavenger. eMachines. Camfrog. I understand the need for a unique trademark, but soon it becomes impossible to communicate with one another. And when the companies go to war over who used the term *online* first for patent purposes ... well, I weep.

[Thumbs Up] – **Match.Com Sex Offender Screening.** It is always nice to see an online company stepping up to the needs of its users. There is nothing under the law that would require Match.com to screen its members to eliminate convicted sex offenders, but when the issue arose the company did the right thing and began screening. Now, if we could get Google to live up to its motto of “Don’t Be Evil.”

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