CPA
Practice Advisor

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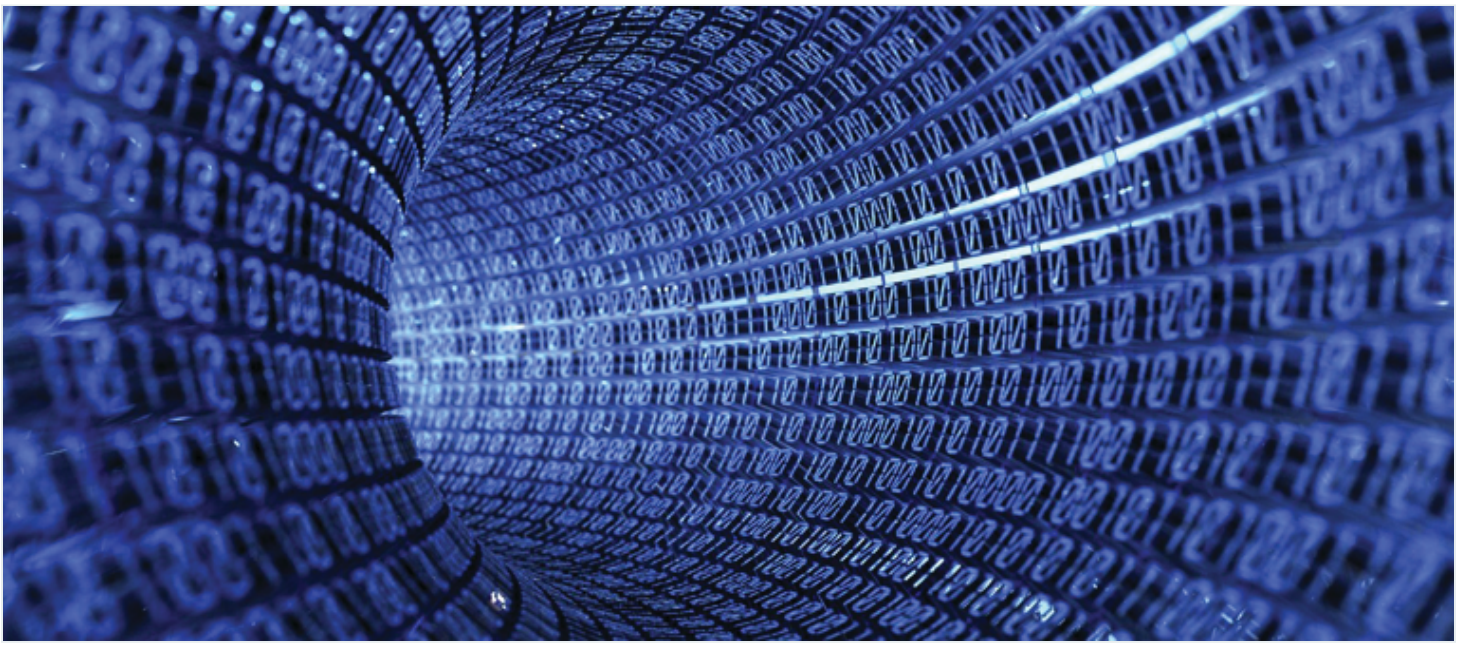
As an accountant or attorney you have an ethical duty to ensure that your clients' electronic information is not lost, destroyed or inadvertently disclosed.

Sep. 17, 2013



From the June 2013 issue.

The majority of small to mid sized practices are vulnerable to unexpected data loss. As an accountant or attorney you have an ethical duty to ensure that your clients' electronic information is not lost, destroyed or inadvertently disclosed.

Everyone in the office should share the responsibility to make sure your content is properly protected and can easily be recovered. You may be the senior partner, the office manager or a new hire but you should be asking some important questions about your backup strategy and seek assistance from a professionally managed online backup provider to help you to avoid a digital disaster.

A computer disaster can happen to anyone at any time and one of the easiest

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Local backups can provide protection from hardware failures, software bugs, corrupt file systems, viruses or the occasional accidental deletion. Recovery can be as simple as copying from an external hard drive or more tedious if you need to find the right CD, thumb drive or tape. Windows 7 and Windows 8 have built-in system backups and just need to be configured. Other utilities such as Acronis True Image or SyncBack need be installed.

Offsite backup provides additional protection from employee sabotage, equipment theft, natural disasters or power surges. Offsite backup requires redundant portable media such as hard drives, CD/DVD's or tape, a secure offsite location and organizational discipline to backup and carry the media offsite regularly. Also remember your media should be encrypted in case of loss or theft.

Online backup services offer the most flexibility and are often the most cost effective solution for small businesses. Investments in hardware, software or media are not required other than general access to the Internet. Important digital content is automatically transferred offsite protecting you from all physical and environmental threats allowing you to recover quickly from most digital disasters. Online backup is also ideal for laptop users since the only requirement is an Internet connection.

Whenever possible, protect your business against loss of critical data with use of both local and offsite / online backups. For example, did you know that Pixar nearly lost Toy Story 2 to a bad backup? This could have been prevented with a second backup solution in place.

Why trust your data in the cloud?

So how do you overcome the distrust of sending your confidential data over the Internet? Strong encryption and proper data handling will keep hackers or even your

backup service provider from unlocking your data and violating your client

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provider allows you to be the only one with access to the encryption key.

Added value with professionally managed services

Not all service providers are created equal. Bargain priced consumer-oriented services offer good service and basic protection but don't always measure up when you have the added responsibility to protect your clients' intellectual property. Self-managed and provider-managed offerings are significantly different. In addition to letting you keep the only key to your backup archive, managed backup providers assist in setting up the software to start your first backup, help you to identify the files and folders containing your business critical information, continuously monitor and verify backup status and proactively alert you if any issues arise.

Everyone has their own roles, responsibilities and skills. Unless you have your own IT staff to properly implement a self-service backup solution, hiring a professional service provides a critical safety-net and allows you to concentrate on your business and your clients.

Features that count

Make sure the software will run on your platform including Mac OS, Windows or Linux. Some providers make you pay a premium of you are running on a server such as Windows 2008.

When the software is properly installed and configured, the backup should start immediately. Expect it run continuously and unattended requiring no staff interaction. It should also consume fewer system resources if it detects if there is a human sitting at the keyboard. To conserve Internet bandwidth, most backup software will compress the data prior to transmission, and even then should only back up changed data. The backup software should also validate the online archive with a daily integrity check and take corrective action when necessary.

Having anytime access to your data with web restore and version retention is also

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by Code 42 Software is a superior product. All three provide both consumer and business products but you need to look for authorized resellers to provide the personalized attention, expert advice and monitoring of a professional managed provider.

South Jersey CrashPlan is an authorized reseller of CrashPlan PRO Enterprise and provides professional managed backup protection at an affordable price. Currently, protecting two computer systems and with generous shared pool of 100 GB is only $20 per month.

In-house local backups are still important but can no longer offer adequate protection in the event of a digital disaster. Online backups offer reliable cost effective protection by getting your data stored safely offsite and with professional management you can relax knowing there is someone watching to make sure. With the recent example of Hurricane Sandy, today should be the day to put a system in place, not tomorrow. Contact South Jersey CrashPlan to see how managed online backup can become part of your backup strategy. Consultation is always free!

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