

One Last Time... How Important Are Small Business Backups?



Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, south-east Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

Last month, I shared with you my personal experience with local search and how it impacted the surgery my dog Daisy needed. This month, I'm going to share with you my personal experience with the importance of offsite backups.

Earlier this month, we had a pretty bad fire at the house. Everyone got out ok, including Daisy and Bailey, but the damage is incredible. We're living in a condo for the next six to nine months while the house is repaired.

The fire started in the center of the house, where all of my networking equipment is located, including my Fortinet router and my Western Digital network attached storage (NAS) device.

I use the NAS primarily to store old tax information, backups of my Quickbooks files, backups of my extremely important pictures from Michigan Football games, and other personal information.

The Fortinet, NAS and everything else that was in that room are completely destroyed - all that remains is

a charred mess of plastic connected together by the thin copper wire that used to be Ethernet cable.

As is always the case, the fire was completely unexpected. And, it happened so fast that we had just enough time to get ourselves and the dogs out. There was no time to save network equipment, much less anything else.

And that's the important thing to take from this. No matter how convinced we are that "it could never happen to me," it's our responsibility as business owners to be prepared for any eventuality.

Fortunately, all of my personal data is protected by the same industrial strength backup solution we use for our business clients - our Experts Total Backup service.

All of my files and documents were backed up to the Tech Experts cloud servers, and nothing was lost. Our Experts Total Backup service works quietly in the background, compressing and encrypting your files before sending a copy of them to the backup server in the cloud.

A few days after the fire, once things settled down, it took just a few hours to copy everything down from the cloud and onto a new NAS unit.

So, what's the take away from all of this? Expect **and prepare** for the unexpected. If I didn't have an offsite backup for my data, I would have lost

a ton of information, but none of it mission critical (except, perhaps, my U of M football pictures).

A similar disaster at a small business would be catastrophic in the best instance, and deadly if the company didn't have offsite backups.

And as I've written many times before, your business's backup is only as good as the last time you tested it.

Whether your backup is onsite using tape or other removable media, or offsite using a service like Experts Total Backup, you must routinely test and verify your backups.

Thanks!

Everyone around me has pitched in to help, but a few folks have gone above and beyond.

Leski Insurance Agency and MEEMIC Insurance Company (734-242-6759) have been incredible.

The **Frenchtown Fire Department** was on-scene in minutes.

Annette Perna-Taormina from Gerweck Real Estate took literally *one day* to find us a temporary place to live. Call her for your real estate needs at (734) 243-4200.

Finally, friends **Michele Paled, Marlene Messina, Tammi VanAken, Candie Mulligan, Kim Harper,** and my mother **Carol** have been incredibly helpful and supportive.



All that remains of my Fortinet 60b firewall, SIP adapter and Western Digital NAS.

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Why Social Networking Is Important For Any Business

by *Jeremy Miller, Technician*

If you are not currently using social media for your business then chances are that you have fallen behind your competitors.

Social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and Google+ are great platforms to promote brand awareness, communicate with existing and potential customers, as well as attract new leads.

Up to a quarter of developed nation's Internet traffic is used on social media and networks. It is free to sign up and use all of these social networks. Why wouldn't you want to address this market?

Social media sites can help you establish your online presence. Statistics show that over 70% of people trust ads on social networks from friends, while only 10% of people trust advertisements from websites.

Social media is more than just getting your name out there; it establishes trust and lasting relationships with new and existing clients. You can keep in touch in a personal manner, update services that you offer, and offer discounts and coupons on your social sites.

Social networks work like word-of-mouth, but more reliably. Your friends and followers can easily share your content with as many people as they want without interrupting their daily lives.

This is important because if it is a hassle to view your advertising

it could be considered a nuisance instead of a promotion.

Instead everyone will check their social sites and see a post from their friend to check out your business. They are already in the mood for reviewing messages, so this is not an inconvenience to read.

Now before you start making a profile on every social site, first consider what you want to get out of social networking. Most businesses could get a Twitter account to share basically anything instantly.

Twitter is great for marketing and reaching many people instantly.

your business.

Each social network is different and attracts different crowds. This can be seen in the usage statistics for each network. This can help you determine which social networks would be best for you to reach your desired audience.

When starting out you want to start slowly. Do not join every social network you can find. It would be best to join Twitter and Facebook at first. Determine who is going to manage the social sites. Then once you have some followers post some polls or special offers to attract more followers.



Once your followers start posting to your page, read their posts and answer them. This will add a lot of value to your business.

You can begin posting articles related to your business to encourage people to spend more time reading your content. Some things to keep in mind would be to not post too often or you may be considered a spammer.

Once you have become familiar with social networks you can expand to other social networks such as Google+ or Pinterest. The most important rule of all is to be patient; you may not see results overnight. However, if you provide quality content, service, and interactions on your social sites you will be successful.

If you would like help determining where you should start or need any help with your existing social networks, give us a call.

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Twitter is another great place to keep up with everything going on at Tech

Experts! You can follow us at www.Twitter.com/TechExperts





Data Security: Why You Should Be Concerned

by *Michael Menor,*
Network Technician

All businesses, big or small, have client data which is the life blood of their company. Losing this data can prove deadly; even worse having this data held hostage.

The purpose of this article is to explain the importance of data security with encryption and also viruses like CryptoLocker which purposely encrypts your data and requests that you pay a ransom to release this data. This nasty little virus is no joke, many companies have fallen prey to it and have paid the ransom which ranges anywhere from \$300 and upwards to \$2000.

Let's talk about this CryptoLocker virus. "What is it?" you ask. This is a piece of ransomware that targets computers with the Windows operating system. This virus is spread as an email attachment and has been seen to pose itself as a voicemail message.

Once CryptoLocker is installed on your computer, it encrypts all documents on your local computer, as well as ones that are stored on network drives and external storage. The encryption used is strong, 2048-bit, cracking this level of encryption is impossible.

It would take approximately 6.4 quadrillion years to break. Even if you were using a super computer

it would take a very long time to break.

Hard drive encryption should be the first step in ensuring data integrity. Microsoft has their own encryption technology called BitLocker, which is only available on Windows Enterprise and Ultimate editions.

TrueCrypt is a free alternative. The only problem with this is that once you authenticate the drive that is secured with either software, it is



ready for use and allows the user to freely read and write to the drive. Which in turn lets other programs on the computer do the same.

In regards to TrueCrypt, it has no supporting management infrastructure, and no key recovery system. If you forget your password, or something goes wrong with the TrueCrypt file, there is no way to get your data back. You must therefore keep separate backups. Another alternative to hard drive

encryption is backing up your important data to the Cloud. You don't have to worry about maintaining a storage server or carrying around an external hard drive. Everything is available to you wherever you go as long as you have an Internet connection.

Talking about all this data security will not stop the standard user from opening email attachments without verifying the sender of this file. Having proper net etiquette

training can be very useful, you want your employees to understand the risks of these attachments and the possible risks involved when they're viewing their email or even browsing the Internet.

Before users open any email attachments they should ask themselves. Is the email address trusted? Were you expecting an email from them? Is the spelling and grammar consistent with what you'd

expect from the sender?

Security Expert, Nick Shaw has created software that can prevent CryptoLocker. This software prevents CryptoLocker from ever executing and has been proven to work on Windows XP and Windows 7 workstations.

Contact us for more information on how to prevent viruses or if you have any questions regarding data security and backups.

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Windows 7 System Information Gadgets

by David Stone
Technician

Microsoft pulled support for desktop gadgets for Windows 7 a while ago, but they are still available and quite handy for getting real time updates on system performance.

If you are an end user that likes to know up-to-the-minute system information, then these are just what you've been looking for.

Below is a list of 5 such gadgets that make accessing information fast and are visually appealing.

Margu Notebook Info 2

Margu Notebook Info 2 is used for laptop and notebook specific information and offers a simple to read layout.

This gadget will give you real-time updates for wireless local area network (WLAN) and local area network (LAN) interfaces, net usage, multicore usage, clock/calendar, central processing unit (CPU), battery, uptime, power management plans, RAM/CPU usage and hard disc drive usage.

The graphical user interface (GUI) allows for you to add/remove any of the information you want to display as well as rearrange the layout. This provides one of the best options for laptops.

Xirrus Wi-Fi Monitor Gadget

Xirrus Wi-Fi Monitor Gadget provides you with very detailed information about wireless connections within range.

It allows you to view the data rate, service set identifier (SSID), the

channel, signal strength, IP addresses and even local connection layouts.

Clicking on a wireless network in the map will return a usage history report of the available networks.

You can even change the skin of the gadget and configure the brightness, although it can be a bit distracting with the constant sonar animation.

Drives Meter

Drives Meter offers up-to-date status of the health of your hard drives as well as set alarms for low disk space. The alarm will make a sound when remaining space left meets the threshold set by the user.

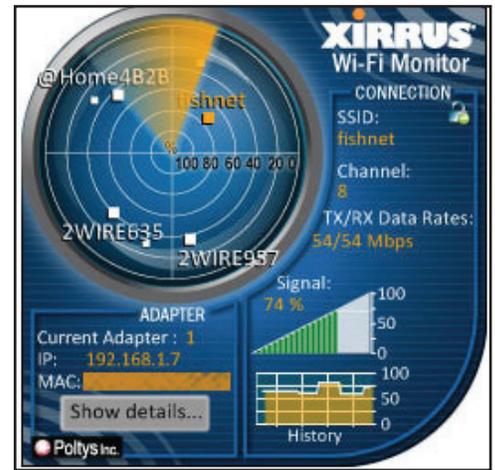
The display shows disk activity, used space, remaining space and total disk space.

This gadget definitely comes in handy when trying to troubleshoot hard drive issues or for keeping tabs on disk usage.

Network Meter Gadget

Network Meter Gadget is an excellent wireless traffic monitor, if not the best.

On one small display screen you can quickly see the wireless service set ID (SSID), internal and external IP addresses, firewall status, signal strength, upload/download speeds, speed test and connection security status.



If you select the fly-out features and see the name of the network, name of the adapter, the maximum speed, the MAC address, the subnet mask, Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) lease details and much more.

System Information

System Information is an all-in-one gadget that allows you to view information on the operating system, CPU, uptime, memory, HDD, network drives, optical drives, battery and network.

You can select how much information you would like to display through the following modes: normal (shows all information), compact (shows headers only) or compressed (only one icon is shown).

Just because Microsoft has determined that support for gadgets will no longer be provided, doesn't mean that you have to do without these tools.

If you're looking for tools to hand out system information, you can't go wrong with one of these gems.