NEWSLETTER ARTICLE:
CAN YOUR DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN ADD VALUE TO YOUR PRODUCT OR COMPANY?

Custom Technology Consultants

IT Consulting and Custom Applications

Can Your Disaster Recovery Plan Add Value to Your Product or Company?

Steps you can take to improve your bottom line while safeguarding your data

It's common knowledge that a disaster recovery plan is a vital part of any company that relies on computer technology. Now a growing number of executives are recognizing that it can also be a powerful tool in marketing their products and business.

As an example, suppose your company is a third party administrator that processes insurance claims. In order to expand, you decide to expand your client base. How do you stand out in the sea of competition? A fool proof disaster recovery plan could provide the edge you need to win those bids. But it may be even more basic than that – some companies won't consider hiring you without such a program in place.

What about other kinds of businesses? Maybe you own a retail store or a medical practice. Regardless of the type, the marketing potential of an effective disaster recovery plan extends beyond your products to the company itself. When the time comes to sell your business, it will be worth much more if an effective plan is listed as one of your assets. In fact, I know business owners who are upgrading their plan specifically because they plan to sell their company and want to get top dollar for it.

But before you start promoting the benefits of your disaster recovery plan to potential customers, you need to make a thorough inspection of what you have in place. Is it actually good enough?

First of all, are you doing backups daily? In a recent survey by Symantec of 1700 IT managers in large corporations around the world, 82% of respondents said their backups occur weekly or even less frequently. A week may not seem like much time but can you actually afford to lose the customer information and the sales and inventory data that would occur during that week? What would happen without that mission critical data at your fingertips?

Are you being overly confident about your recovery system? The survey responses revealed that the IT managers tended to be optimistic about the amount of time it really takes to get back up and running. If hit by a significant disaster that destroyed their main data center, they expected downtime to last two hours or less. The actual median time was five hours. It's bad enough to operate for one five-hour period without your tech resources. What about having to do it four times a year? That's not an arbitrary number. The organizations in this study suffered four downtime incidents in the last 12 months.

Are you *fully* testing your backup system on a regular basis? This is a vital point – one that's often missed by company executives or IT managers who may have been lulled into a false sense of security by a few positive tests. A case in point. One of my acquaintances works for an organization that installed a very complex software program which is being counted on to generate millions of dollars. Once the backup system tested out successfully, full testing fell out for several months. When they retested, the backup failed and a mad scramble ensued to correct the situation. Luckily they caught the problem before a real outage occurred.

These are points you need to consider when judging the adequacy of your disaster recovery plan. If you, like many of those in the survey, are balked by lack of sufficient personnel and finances or if your system doesn't have enough backup storage space, consider what you can do using cloud-based resources.

First, let's clarify what is meant by "the cloud." In his article "Learning About Everything Under the Cloud" (*The Wall Street Journal*, 6 May 2010) Walt Mossberg gave a very simple and concise definition: "At its most basic level, the 'cloud' is simply the Internet, or the vast array of servers around the world that comprise it. When people say a digital document is stored, or a digital task is being performed in the cloud, they mean that the file or application lives on a server you access over an Internet connection, via a Web browser or app, rather than on 'local' devices, like your computer or smartphone."

In the past, many companies relied on tape-based backup systems which are often unwieldy and prone to error. The cloud can provide substantial savings and a significant increase in technical resources, especially for small and medium sized businesses. In fact, renting enough space on the cloud for a full-server backup of data, applications and operating systems can be very affordable for a mid-sized company. With the proper recovery programs, you can quickly be up and running after a disaster.

Your disaster recovery plan can both safeguard your data and improve your position in the marketplace. The first step is an objective and thorough inspection of your present plan. With a resource like the cloud, it can be more affordable and convenient.

For more information or for a free consultation contact Custom Technology Consultants at
1 (800) 590-4764
www.GetCustomTech.com