

A close-up, low-angle shot of the side of the Titanic ship, showing the name 'TITANIC' in gold lettering on a dark blue hull. The ship is set against a clear blue sky.

Connected Office >>> Whitepaper: **BACKUP & DISASTER RECOVERY UNRAVELLED**

This whitepaper discusses a key issue impacting every business that relies on data (which in turn, means every business that relies on technology). When business stakeholders (owner, CFO, managers) think of IT disaster recovery what they are typically referring to is actually **'Data Backup'**. Data backup is the creation of a copy of critical corporate data located on a server or desktop for the purposes of being able to recover that data when needed. Reasons for having to recover data include:

- **file system corruption;**
- **hardware failure;**
- **accidental deletion; and/or**
- **vandalism.**

There are many software packages available that are designed to provide data recovery. They range from sub-\$100 portable hard disks with one-touch backup, to software like Symantec Backup Exec that can cost tens of thousands of dollars for complete coverage of a multi-server environment. They all have their strengths and weaknesses depending on your budget and propensity for data loss. No matter what the cost/benefit analysis of any backup solution, two weaknesses they all have include: **the human factor**, and **proper planning** of a data protection strategy. Even the best automated systems have to be managed by a technical engineer who has to design a strategy that can be automated, tested and managed. As complicated as this might be, this is actually an oversimplified view of what **Disaster Recovery (DR)** entails. Data backup is designed to primarily provide restored data with some ability to re-create systems.

Disaster recovery, on the other hand, refers to your ability to rapidly overcome any system failure and return to a fully functional state so that the overall impact to your business is minimized. Traditionally the cost of such capability has been prohibitive for small and medium-sized businesses (SMB) as it required the hosting of redundant hardware co-located at a data center – this resulted in more than doubling the cost of maintaining and supporting IT for the business. Over the past few years, affordable new technologies have emerged, so that the average SMB can now take advantage of technology DR plans and protect their businesses. Two technologies that specifically allow SMBs to have an effective DR plan are:

- **Server Imaging; and**
- **Virtualization Software.**

When deployed properly, these technologies allow for the re-creation of any server in a short time period, so that the impact on end-users are minimized allowing them to continue working even if the primary server fails.

When designing a data protection strategy, typically an SMB had to choose between data backup or DR, with data backup being less expensive. The downside of that data backup only is that ultimately when a catastrophic hardware failure happens (and it will), the SMB is faced with very high cost of recovery – new hardware, professional services to rebuild, end-user downtime and often, corporate and client data loss. These events can run easily into the tens of thousands of dollars (not to mention the potential loss of revenue, invaluable intellectual property, customer confidence and legal liability in regulated industries and under privacy laws).

The most cost-effective plan include both data backup and DR - that way a network is protected from both data loss and catastrophic hardware failure. When offline storage is added to this, the protection is extended to cover natural disasters, terrorist action and loss of access to the premises due to fire, flood or other factors. The plan also has to address triggers for failing over to DR secondary access. These triggers should be outlined clearly in your corporate Backup and Disaster Recovery Plan, so that they are easily understood even if key people are not available.

The **Backup & Disaster Recovery (BDR)** services from The Utility Company offer the best protection available in a cost-effective package for the average SMB. Our BDR system protects against accidental deletion of data, data corruption, security breaches, hardware failure, loss of access as well as total loss of premises and equipment. It utilizes complete snapshots of your IT systems and data taken at intervals and stores them at a secure data center offsite. Using this type of technology ensures that in the event of any issues with your data, you can easily recover and have your systems back online in as little as an hour, as opposed to days or weeks. This allows your employees to get back to business. The data protection strategy is fully designed and managed by the certified engineers, so you can have peace of mind in knowing that your business is protected no matter what happens.

At The Utility Company we urge all SMBs to take a good hard look at their business and make sure they are as disaster-proof as they can be. To put it in a simple perspective, if your home burnt down and you lost all your family photographs, it would be possible to recreate them all IF you had the foresight to make digital copies and save a copy of all those files elsewhere. If you didn't however, a lifetime of invaluable memories will be just that, memories. And no one wants their business to be just that either – a memory.

About The Utility Company

The Utility Company® is a leading provider of virtual IT service and support for businesses, delivering the required hardware, software & service for a monthly fixed fee per user.

Our Connected Office® service program provides a single point of contact to deliver and manage technology, communications & vertical line of business applications – **95% Remote; 100% Proactive.**

Customers are supported by local Utility Service Providers delivering on-site service & business-technology consulting to reduce spending and increase utilization – our Beyond Managed Services® franchise opportunity is available by prospectus only.

Learn how to make technology work for your business today at theutilitycompany.com

Backup Differences

There are many different types of online backup solutions available today. Some are ultra low cost and some are more expensive. The differences between them are like comparing the included Windows NT backup utility to Symantec Backup Exec. One is free and included with every operating system, the other costs thousands of dollars and can provide a complete data protection strategy. When it comes to the ultra low cost online backup solutions from companies like Mozy, you must remember that these products are designed to primarily provide online data storage. They are not designed to provide a data protection strategy. They can be **part** of a bigger strategy, but do not provide that natively.

Data protection strategies include policies on data retention, versioning, live database backup and restoration capabilities. Backup of MS-Exchange and MS-SQL have to be done using special techniques or the data may not be restorable. You **cannot** just backup the flat files and use these to recreate the databases, there is a lot more complexity to these types of servers. As well, true data protection will include the ability to ensure that Active Directory and the system state of servers is protected properly. This gives you the ability to re-create a domain from your backup, not just restore the data files. Even on desktops, files like PST files and MSDE must be backed up properly in order for the data to be protected correctly.

So while online backup at \$1.00 per GB may seem like a good idea, these services do not have the capabilities to provide a complete data protection strategy that will allow an organization to recover from a catastrophic failure. Sure they are great if you accidentally delete the word document you were working on last week. But if you need to restore your Active Directory and Exchange database, they will fall short. Ask yourself a quick question: "If my building burns down and all my customer's and sales data is lost and I have to rebuild my business from scratch – do I want that ability to rebuild my entire business dependant on a service that costs \$6.95." You get what you pay for.