

Medical Office Systems, LLC

January 2016 Issue #1 Backup, Backup, Backup

No, the title of this issue is not a meditation chant. But if your computer crashes, it will be more calming than any deep breathing exercise, and will keep your blood pressure down more than any Zen master could hope to achieve. Backups are generically classified in two categories by location of the files: **local backup** to a disk, and **cloud backup** to a remote server via the internet. Within that classification are two major types of backups: **file backup** and **image backup**.

I'll give you the short answer first, and explain later:

#1: have at least two **Local Backup** disks and backup software running on a regular **daily** schedule

#2: set your backup software to make both a **File Backup** and an **Image Backup**

#3: one disk should always be **stored offsite**, and one being backed up onsite, then **rotate them daily**

#4: as an extra safety measure, add a **Cloud Backup** as an off-site File Backup solution

Long answer: Basically, you need to protect three things on your computer: **your Data, Programs, and Settings**. How to protect them differs, and requires two types of backup: File Backup and Image Backup. **File Backup** is simple: a second copy of any data file in a different location that is in a recognizable format that can be used immediately. File Backup is great for any type of file: documents, spreadsheets, photos, movies, music, etc. File Backup is **not good** for programs or settings made to the computer (like Word, Excel, Quickbooks, etc.). Program files and computer Settings are "special", and can only be backed up in an Image Backup.

An **Image Backup** is a special type of compressed file that copies your entire computer's contents, including the programs and settings into one "Image" file. This "Image" file can be used to restore the entire computer back to a new hard disk and be ready to boot up like new. Well, you may ask, why not just do image backup only? The answer is the time element: image restores take a long time. If you lose just one or two files, a file backup is quicker.

Now consider this: if your computer completely crashed and you had to start from scratch, the process of loading all the software, restoring all the files, and putting back all the settings could take a day or more. This is where Image Backup shines: a restore may take from 1 hour up to 3 hours, but a complete re-install and manually making all the settings could take an entire day or longer. Believe me: I've been there, and done that: **you need both**.

Keeping files offsite: Imagine you only have one backup disk, or you have two disks, but frequently forget to rotate them on/offsite. Now imagine a disaster like a fire or theft of all your computer equipment. What would you have? **Nothing**. You could go purchase new computers and the like, but what about your data, programs, and settings? The backup disk sitting in the closet from 6 months ago is just that: 6-month old data, which in most cases is useless. This is why it is so important to have multiple backup copies and keep the current version off-site.

If you are like me, the above scenario about forgetting to rotate disks offsite is all too real. But there is a solution: **Cloud Backup**. You can get a Carbonite personal cloud backup for less than \$99 per year, so no excuses people. Unfortunately, image backups are huge files, and although some cloud backup services offer image backup, it is very slow. So it is best to have your Image backups on a locally-stored location for the near future, or at least until superfast Gigabit internet is available.

I will detail how to set up a local backup system in the next issues... stay tuned.

-John Becker

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