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Data Backup - How To Identify and Measure Digital Delusion Disorder

"Over time, 100% of computers fail 100% of the time."

Picture the following scene:

It's Friday at 3:30pm, and you're just about to shut down your office for a much needed weekend retreat at your family's cottage.

You're already running behind schedule to pick up the kids-it was a busy week after all-and you'd really like to get a jump on the afternoon traffic.

As you're quickly gathering your things together and heading for the door, you catch a glimpse of your "sleeping" computer out of the corner of your eye. The question flashes through your mind: When was the last time I backed up my computer?

And how do you feel? Are you confident (or perhaps even nonchalant) about the safety of your digital records? Or do you acknowledge the intense tug of war being waged between your diligent, rational, backup-friendly self and the playful, reckless part of you that just wants to break free for the weekend? Besides, you say to yourself, what are the chances my computer will crash over the weekend?

And so you quickly leave, lock the door behind you and happily rush off for another glorious weekend. You believe, like so many others, that your computer will soldier on; will be there for you through thick and thin; will never, ever give up. Yes, you're aware of the possibility of a crash, and even considered the possibility of a theft or fire, but you just don't believe it could happen to you.

You're suffering from a common entrepreneurial syndrome that I like to call "Digital Delusion Disorder". All of us computer users suffer some measure of DDD, but what's important is the extent to which this delusion is putting your business and your livelihood at risk.

Mild Digital Delusion Disorder Risk

You understand the true value of your digital information and devote the time and energy to manually backup your computers to a tape-drive, external hard-drive, memory stick, or CDs and DVDs on a regular basis. You also make a habit of testing the recovery of files from your backups.

You rely heavily on your computers to operate and organize your business, and you're conscious of the fact that a computer is merely a machine with moving parts that can break down at any time.

You perform your computer backup at least once a week, and store your backup disks offsite, but you still worry that your unencrypted backup tapes are vulnerable, and that your backup really should be completed every day.

What to do if this is you: the remedy

Train at least two other reliable people to perform your computer backup, and increase your backup schedule to a daily routine. You may want to hand this task over to a trustworthy employee, but be sure to train a second person as well, who can perform the backup if the first employee is home sick or away on vacation.

You should also consider looking into a computer backup service that will automatically encrypt your backups. Additionally, storing your backups offsite is certainly the right idea, but do NOT entrust this duty to another individual. Remember, your backups contain your business' most valuable and sensitive information, and only you should have access to it!

Moderate Digital Delusion Disorder Risk

Your business is growing quickly, and you are implementing procedures and systems to help you organize, automate, and execute your business.

Computer backup is a necessary evil that you do when you think about it, but you find it difficult to make time to do so, let alone test your backups regularly to ensure that your information is recoverable.

You currently store your backup in your desk or beside your computer, which incidentally has been making a strange whirring noise if you listen closely.

What to do if this is you: the remedy

Repeat after me: "Computer backup is critical to the survival of my business."

That's right! According to the U.S. National Archive and Records Administration in Washington, 93% of small businesses that suffer a computer crash and lose access to their digital information for 10 days or more, go under within one year.

Also, one of Canada's national newspapers, the Globe and Mail, printed in May 2007 that 70% of small businesses that experience major data loss close their doors within the year.

So whether it's 70% or 93%, those bankruptcy rates are too high to ignore, agreed?

Go back and apply the remedy for Mild DDD, and repeat the above quote twice daily for 21 days.

Also, find a local IT Service company that offers monthly maintenance contracts to service and clean your computer on a regular basis.

Severe Digital Delusion Disorder Risk

In too many cases, entrepreneurs just like you don't realize how much their businesses rely upon the digital information stored on their computers, and they falsely imagine that their businesses could easily survive for more than 10 days without that information.

In truth, you really have not considered how much your digital information-like your contact databases, marketing templates, accounting files and so on- contributes to your income generation, nor do you believe that inhibited access to this information would derail the day to day activities of your business.

But, in truth, you use your computer every day for a wide variety of tasks and as your primary method of document storage. You take your computer for granted, and have only a vague idea of what information is actually being housed on your machines. Accordingly, you back up your computer rarely-if ever-and continue to run and grow your business without any concept of a recovery plan should the inevitable crash occur.

What to do if this is you: the remedy

Ask yourself one question: If you could not access any of the files or records stored on your computer, how much time and money would it take for you to rebuild your business to its current level of success?

Really think about this!

Make an itemized inventory of the digital records stored on your computer, and estimate the amount of time and money that it cost you to acquire that information in the first place. Also, estimate how much income you would lose over the next year if you did not have access to that information.

It really adds up, doesn't it? I bet you're well into the tens of thousands-if not hundreds of thousands-of dollars, and many years of hard work.

Now consider that you can automatically backup your computer every day using a reputable online computer backup and recovery service for a tiny fraction of that cost. Remember the opening quote: Over time, 100% of computers fail 100% of the time. Don't let Digital Delusion Disorder become a real risk to the survival of your business. Act today to protect your digital information, and **SAVE** your business!

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