

The Price Of Complacency

If you have been “online” for any length of time, then you have at one time or other experienced a computer crash. If you haven’t — please knock on wood right now!

Most of you know what I am talking about though. The dreaded grind, the whirring noises that fire off when nothing is happening — at least nothing that YOU are doing. Hackers and Spammers, Trojan horses, viruses and worms — it’s enough to frighten off the faint at heart. But we of the Internet generation plow ahead. We load firewalls, anti-virus programs, spyware removal programs and applications that monitor our “ad saturation”.

For those of us online more than most, or just responsible for client data, source files, documents, etc... there is an additional step of protection we take.

Backup.

But what does all this have to do with complacency? We’re taking the steps necessary to protect ourselves... right?

Not always, as I recently learned.

I am a programmer and web designer in my “day job”. This means I have a lot of data/source files on my computer that the client would be upset if I lost. I have taken extreme measures to ensure those files are safe and sound and tucked into bed each night. I have programs running that backup the critical files every 2 hours, regardless of what I am doing. I have a second backup that runs once each night to another hard drive. Redundant copies of the files across multiple hard drives. Safe. Right?

Well, most were. About 3 months ago, I started using Mozilla’s Thunderbird for my email client (excellent program, by the way). Thunderbird creates “mailboxes” on my computer for when I download my email’s. I have something like 14 email addresses and it created one mailbox for each. It created these mailboxes on my C: drive. Normally, I have all data writing to my F: drive (because this is the one that gets backed up every two hours, remember?).

Enter Complacency.

I have backup jobs running. I am protecting my data. With Heatsoft Automatic Synchronizer, it’s a “set and forget” kinda thing.

Whoops. A recent crash took out my hard drive and forced me to “reload” my operating system and tools. I have something like 74 tools and applications that I use and it takes a while to reload everything. Not with Acronis however... Acronis is an “imaging” software application that “burns” an image of your hard drive (or individual partitions) that you can later restore. I have images of both my C: and D: drives (where I load the operating system and tools).

Crash and Burn. Reload my system from images. Whole thing took about 4 hours. That’s when I discovered my complacency had cost me big time.

I had all my client’s files, programs, HTML files.... almost everything. What I didn’t have was my EMAIL and my ADDRESS BOOK! Yikes!

See, I never updated Thunderbird to point the data (my mail) to my normal “data” drive so it would be backed up automatically. Complacency. Found another lost soldier as well. My bookmarks (also stored on drive C:), favorites, and desktop settings.

The fault was mine, not the tools I use.

I had intently NOT backed up anything on C: drive, since that is my operating system, drivers for devices like my card reader, surround sound, backup hard drives and modem. After I install two or three new applications, I burn another image using Acronis. I just set it before going to bed, and by morning, I have another “complete installation” already setup with my programs, settings, bookmarks... the works. All ready to be “restored” in the event of the unthinkable.

If I had let HAS know about the new email client, I wouldn’t have had any problems. From crash to restore, less than 4 hours.

You can bet I have since updated Thunderbird to put the mailboxes on another hard drive, one that gets backups often (like every 2 hours).

Okay, thanks for listening to my ramblings. I was just so mad at myself, that I needed to vent. But let me ask you this... If you lost your hard drive tomorrow, would you be able to "recover" from the loss? Is your financial data secure? Please ask yourself these questions now, before it is too late.

Over the last 20 years, I am come to depend on my computer more and more. I have been on an active hunt to protect myself and the contents of my computer. I am listing info on the products I use to protect myself and my clients.

* [Acronis Disk Imaging Software](#): Allows me to burn a complete image of my computer and all software and data that is installed. Once I have an "image" burned, I can "restore" it any time I want. I recommend a new image after each major software installation. If you don't install program often, then just get your machine exactly where you like it (installed programs, settings, fonts, drivers, etc) and then burn your image. You can copy to CD's or DVD's and keep in a safe place (offsite is preferred). Please remember this just puts everything back the way it was at the time of the "backup". If you have changed files, source documents, financial data, recent email's, etc., you will need to take the next step shown below.

* [Heatsoft Automatic Synchronizer](#): Allows me to copy all "changed" files since the last backup to another hard drive. The preferred method is to have a secondary hard drive connected to your computer. I use a 100 gig laptop hard drive in a "external case" (about \$75 to setup) attached via a USB port. For my nightly backup's, I also have a 300 gig external hard drive (desktop computer hard drive) connected via USB. The little drive goes with me when I travel, the big drive stays at home.

Hope this rant helps you avoid some painful data loss.

About the Author

Cenay Nailor has successfully worked from home since 1991, and has spent the last 14 months teaching others how to do the same thing... successfully. She also is the Founder of Videos by Cenay -- A how to site devoted to the Internet and computer tasks that are often daunting for most people.

Need to know more about a subject, just submit a request and she will make a video showing you how. (<http://videos.CenayNailor.com>)

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