Data backup:
Protecting your most valuable asset

Summary
A growing number of businesses rely on data or electronically stored information. As a result, they need to know that it can be recovered easily in the event of a serious failure or major incident. Without contingency plans for such recovery the very survival of a company could be at stake. Archiving and restoration of data can be a complicated and time-consuming process and more businesses are relying on third party providers to support them with this.

This paper provides an outline of the benefits of working with an IT partner for data back up.
Introduction

Any business relying on data or electronically stored information needs to know that it can be recovered.

In 2007, Computer Weekly reported on a Forrester (2007) survey which found that disaster recovery systems would be a key driver for businesses over the next twelve months, with 39% of businesses citing ‘disaster recovery’ to be a top priority. Disasters following catastrophic events such as 9/11 and more recent severe weather and flooding events can spell disaster for a company’s systems and data.

The 2007 floods that hit Northern and Central England left many businesses unable to operate. According to the Chartered Institute of Loss Adjustors (Computer Weekly, 2007), a staggering 6,800 businesses claimed for damages following such events, at an average cost of £100,000 per claim. Stephen Mitchell from the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce commented, “Many businesses did not have alternative back-up systems to enable them to keep working, and many more simply didn’t have contingency plans for this type of catastrophe.” (Computer Weekly, 2007)

Any business relying on data or electronically stored information (which applies to almost every business) needs to know that their information can be recovered in the event of a serious failure or catastrophic incident. If it can’t, the very survival of a company could be at stake without contingency plans for such recovery.

With a company’s data being its most valuable asset, it is no surprise that the DTI Security Breaches Survey (2006) reports that 63% of companies recognise the importance of data integrity. The thought of losing all your customer, employee and financial data is terrifying yet many businesses do not have a procedure where data is regularly backed up, stored off site and available for restoration in the event of a major incident.

Backing up systems doesn’t top the chart of favourite IT activities and all too often, its one of those mundane tasks that takes a back seat behind other IT priorities. The archiving and restoration of data can be quite a complicated and time-consuming process, which is why businesses are turning to third party providers to achieve best practice and ensure that regular, scheduled back-up’s of data and systems happen. According to Continuity Central (2007), analyst firm Gartner reported that there is a growing importance in the use of third-party providers to conduct business continuity and disaster recovery programmes. However, further work is needed to be done to increase the quality and maturity of such programmes.

It’s never possible to plan for absolutely every incident or disaster involving data or key systems however, IT partners are generally at the forefront of business continuity services as they have to ensure that they can continue to provide such services to their own customers.

IT partners can provide a range of flexible services relating to the backing up, storage and restoration of critical data. There is a broad range of manual, automated, managed and Internet based data back-up services on the market. The choice of which depends on budget, resource and business continuity planning requirements.

Paul Watson, VP of Marketing at Star says, “Organisations are seeking to take the hassle out of backing up their data. They want to ensure that data back-up and restoration can be carried out as securely and efficiently as possible.” Star provides a range of flexible solutions that can safeguard business critical data, including; data back-up, recovery services, key system back-up and restoration services through to replicate business systems such as email, Web site and Internet through to full disaster recovery services.’
Talking to your IT partner is a good place to start and can deliver a number of advantages:

**Best practice**
IT partners are usually at the forefront of the latest technologies and services for data back-up and restoration processes. Due to their own stringent business continuity requirements, they are able to provide advice, support and examples of best practice services for data back-up from manual tape back-up through to remote Internet-based services.

**Security**
Protecting your data and ensuring that it is secure is critical in today’s Internet based environment. IT partners that offer back-up services provide the highest levels of security as they are responsible for ensuring that your data is backed up and archived in a secure manner.

**Cost**
Cost is generally dependent on what needs to be backed up, frequency of back up and how quickly it needs to be restored. Internet-based back-up services favoured by IT partners can be considered more cost effective than manual, daily tape back-up services in view of the resource, storage and time required to complete this activity in-house.

**Resource & reliability**
Through a service-level guarantee, IT partners are responsible for ensuring that regular, scheduled back-up’s of your data and systems occur enabling your IT staff to focus on other business priorities. In house, manual tape back-up procedures can be time consuming and tedious. If they are not high on the list of IT priorities may not happen on a regular basis.

**Time**
Retrieving data – especially in the case of a major system failure, can be very time consuming for IT staff. Some IT partners offer service level guarantees for the restoration of data, which can free up IT personnel to work on other priorities.

Using third party providers for data back-up, archiving and restoration can deliver a number of benefits. Your IT partner is likely to be familiar with your business communications infrastructure and will work with you to ensure that they implement IT a solution that meets your business and budget requests. The key to achieving this is to ensure that you pick an IT partner that understands your business, requirements and market space.
About Star

Star is the largest independent business to business Internet Services Provider in the UK, serving over 500,000 business users. Star has over 13 years experience in providing practical Internet-driven services for UK small to medium sized enterprises (SMBs).

By listening, understanding and responding to the needs of SMEs we develop solutions to tackle IT issues. Security, hosting, connectivity and email have been brought together to provide the broadest range of integrated business ready technology services. Star focuses on developing and delivering products that fulfil the needs of small and medium sized businesses whilst providing outstanding and dedicated customer support.

For further information call: 0800 138 4443
email: info@star.net.uk visit: www.star.net.uk