

Advisory Guide:

“The 10 Disaster Planning Essentials for Any Business”

Important planning strategies you should have in place now to protect yourself from common data-erasing disasters.

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A Letter from the Author: Why Did We Create This Report and Who Should Read It



From The Desk of: Bill Jest
Business Technology Advisor

Dear Colleague,

If your data is important to your business and you cannot afford to have your operations halted for days - even weeks - due to data loss or corruption, then you need to read this report and act on the information shared.

A disaster can happen at any time on any day and is likely to occur at the most inconvenient time. If you aren't already prepared, you run the risk of having the disaster coming before you have in place a plan to handle it. This report will outline 10 things you should have in place to make sure your business could be back up and running again in the event of a disaster.

At the end of this report, there is an invitation for you to request a **Free Disaster Recovery Audit** to help you determine what service could be right for your particular business. I encourage you to take advantage of this before making any decisions since we've designed it to take a hard look at the functionality and costs for you as a business and to provide you with the specific information you need (not hype) in order to make a good decision about protecting your company.

About The Author

I am part of a team recognised by Microsoft with the Data Centre competency that helps business's and IT departments investigate, plan and deploy advanced IT management systems. The same principles that apply to these businesses apply to smaller businesses without their own IT resource.

Our emphasis is on establishing and developing long-term relationships based on understanding our clients' businesses, to provide solutions and services for their IT that help prevent unexpected expenditure and enable them to get the full value out of their IT investment. We are part of a group of companies specialising in business development centered around an established chartered accountancy firm that now includes an FSA regulated financial advisor, property experts and a telecoms division. All the companies within the group work to the same high ethical standards.

What Is Disaster Recovery?

Wikipedia defines cloud computing as “a documented process or set of procedures to recover and protect a business IT infrastructure in the event of a disaster”

The 10 Disaster Planning Essentials

A list of essential processes and procedures a company should have documented.

1. Have a written plan.

As simple as it may sound, just thinking through in ADVANCE what needs to happen if your server has a meltdown or a natural disaster destroys your office, will go a long way in getting it back fast. At a minimum, the plan should contain details on what disaster could happen and a step-by-step process of what to do, who should do it and how. Also include contact information for various providers and username and password information for various key websites. Writing this plan will also allow you to think about what you need to budget for backup, maintenance and disaster recovery. If you can't afford to have your network down for more than a few hours, then you need a plan that can get you back up and running within that time frame. You may want the ability to virtualize your server, allowing the office to run off of the virtualized server while the real server is repaired. If you can afford to be down for a couple of days, there are cheaper solutions. Once written, print out a copy and store it in a fireproof safe, an offsite copy (at your home) and a copy with your IT consultant.

2. Hire a trusted professional to help you.

Trying to recover your data after a disaster without professional help is business suicide; one misstep during the recovery process can result in forever losing your data or result in weeks of downtime. Make sure you work with someone who has experience in both setting up business contingency plans (so you have a good framework from which you CAN restore your network) and experience in data recovery.

3. Have a communications plan.

If something should happen where employees couldn't access your office, e-mail or use the phones, how should they communicate with you? Make sure your plan includes this information including MULTIPLE communications methods.

4. Automate your backups.

If backing up your data depends on a human being doing something, it's flawed. The #1 cause of data loss is human error (people were not swapping out tapes properly, someone was not setting up the backup to run properly, etc.). ALWAYS automate your backups so they run like clockwork.

5. Have an offsite backup of your data.

Always, always, always maintain a recent copy of your data off-site, on a different server, or on a storage device. Onsite backups are good, but they won't help you if they get stolen, flooded, burned or hacked along with your server.

6. Have remote access and management of your network.

Not only will this allow you and your staff to keep working if you can't go into your office, but you'll love the convenience it offers. Plus, your IT staff or an IT consultant should be able to access your network remotely in the event of an emergency or for routine maintenance. Make sure they can.

7. Image your server.

Having a copy of your data offsite is good, but keep in mind that all that information has to be RESTORED someplace to be of any use. If you don't have all the software disks and licenses, it could take days to reinstate your applications (like Microsoft Office, your database, accounting software, etc.) even though your data may be readily available. Imaging your server is similar to making an exact replica; that replica can then be directly copied to another server saving an enormous amount of time and money in getting your network back. Best of all, you don't have to worry about losing your preferences, configurations or favorites. To find out more about this type of backup, ask your IT professional.

8. Network documentation.

Network documentation is simply a blueprint for the software, data, systems and hardware you have in your company's network. Your IT manager or IT consultant should put this together for you. This will make the job of restoring your network faster, easier AND cheaper. It also speeds up the process of everyday repairs on your network since the technicians don't have to spend time figuring out where things are located and how they are configured. And finally, should disaster strike, you have documentation for insurance claims of exactly what you lost. Again, have your IT professional document this and keep a printed copy with your disaster recovery plan.

9. Maintain Your System.

One of the most important ways to avoid disaster is by maintaining the security of your network. While fires, floods, theft and natural disasters are certainly a threat, you are much more likely to experience downtime and data loss due to a virus, worm or hacker attack. That's why it's critical to keep your network patched, secure and up-to-date. Additionally, monitor hardware for deterioration and software for corruption. This is another overlooked threat that can wipe you out. Make sure you replace or repair aging software or hardware to avoid this problem.

10. Test, test, test!

A study conducted in October 2007 by Forrester Research and the Disaster Recovery Journal found that 50 percent of companies test their disaster recovery plan just once a year while 14 percent never test. If you are going to go through the trouble of setting up a plan, then, at least, hire an IT pro to run a test once a month to make sure your backups are working and your system is secure. After all, the worst time to test your parachute is AFTER you've jumped out of the plane.

A Final Word...

I hope you have found this guide helpful and it inspires you to take DR seriously.

My experience of disasters that have needed companies to enact their plan have not been earthshattering but actually quite mundane. It's not been a river bursting its banks that has destroyed their server but a simple radiator valve slowly leaking that eventually brings the ceiling down. It's not been a malicious member of staff destroying data but a well-meaning employee trying to help his colleagues. Buildings rarely get blown up but often get evacuated for a few hours while a check is carried out by the authorities.

The inconvenience of preparing a plan could be far less than the inconvenience of losing your company.

Below you will find information on how to request a Disaster Recovery Audit. This is, of course, provided with no obligations and no expectations for you to use us. I want to be clear that this is NOT a bait and switch offer or a trick to get you to buy something. Our reputation for running an honest and trustworthy business is something we hold very dear. I would never jeopardise that in any way. So why are we offering something like this for free?

Two reasons:

- 1.** We are simply offering this service as a risk-free “get to know us” offer to people we haven’t had the pleasure of doing business with. Again, our goal is to allow you to make an informed and confident decision; offering this service is one way we can help you better evaluate our services.
- 2.** This will allow us to determine if we even CAN help you. Obviously, we can’t help everyone and our service might not be a good fit for your particular circumstances. Conducting this Assessment enables us to perform a small service for you and give you a risk-free way of determining whether or not we’re the right company for you without risking your money.

Disaster Recovery Audit

As a prospective customer, we would like to offer you a Disaster Recovery Audit and cost analysis. This Assessment has three parts:

- 1. Cost Analysis and Inventory:** Our first step is to look at what your current network consists of in hardware, licenses, data, and applications. Next, we compile an IT cost assessment to reveal what you spend in total on IT, including Internet connectivity, support and other fees. Most business owners have never really looked at their entire IT costs this way, and often this report alone is an eye-opener. Why do we do this? Because our goal is to find ways we can significantly lower those costs while simplifying and improving your workflow.
- 2. Health Check:** We will perform an audit of your entire network to look for potential problems, security loopholes, spyware and other hidden problems that you might not know about. Often we find faulty backups, out-of-date anti-virus software, faulty firewalls and missing security patches that, if left unaddressed, could end up costing you MORE in new hardware, support, business downtime and data loss.
- 3. DR Readiness:** After we’ve looked at the above areas, we then look at how you and your employees work and share information to see what applications or processes need to be maintained and what are their critical time scales. So you can continue to run the business and not inconvenience your customers.

When complete, we’ll give you an Action Plan that shows you how we can save you money and resolve a number of workarounds and problems you may have been experiencing to date. Even if you decide not to hire us, having a third party conduct this type of assessment will give you some good information on saving money and the security and health of your computer network.

How To Request Your Disaster Recovery Audit:

To request your Consultation do one of the following:

1. Complete and send in the enclosed "Fast Action" response form.
2. Call us direct at 020 8740 6000
3. Send us an e-mail: info@wemit.co.uk

I will call you to schedule a convenient time for us to chat or meet for 20 minutes. Remember, there is no obligation for you to buy or do anything – this is simply a discovery meeting to see our service could be right for you.

Bill Jest
Wem Technology Ltd

Fast Action Response Form:

"Yes! Please reserve a Disaster Recovery Audit in my name so I can find out what my options are, get an answer to my questions, and get a handle on the steps and costs involved. I understand that I'm under NO obligation to do or buy anything by signing up for this consultation.

Please Complete and Fax Back:

Name: _____
Title: _____
Company: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ Post Code _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
E-mail: _____

Do you have any other questions or problems you would like to discuss?
Simply outline them below:

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Fax This Form To: 020 8740 2188 or Call: 020 8740 6000