

A Small Business' Guide to Backing Up Data

🕒 READ TIME: 2 MINS

👥 AUDIENCE: SMALL BUSINESS

The first lecture I ever received as a Computer Science undergraduate was about the importance of backing up data. It is essential for everyone but particularly important for small businesses. Small businesses often don't have the infrastructure of larger companies and as such backing up is often seen as a hassle. Here's an easy small business guide to backing up your data.

WHAT DATA SHOULD YOU BACK UP?

Not all data is created equal. Of course, you need to back up everything, however for some business-critical data you may want to back up in several locations.

Consider going through the various types of data you store (Customer information, invoices, supplier information, marketing materials, quarter end reports, etc) and rank them in terms of importance. Which data if lost would stop your business from functioning?

HOW SHOULD YOU BACK YOUR DATA UP?

So now you've identified which data is

important, how should you back it up? For one off critical documents, the easiest way to ensure it is backed up is to securely email it to yourself. If you accidentally delete it, you can simply search for the email.

For a larger set of files, an obvious way to backup is to use an external hard drive (preferably one with high transfer speed). Once a day, copy across the files you wish to back up. However, do not store this hard drive in the same place as your laptop. If your laptop were to get stolen, you don't want the hard drive being next to it.

IS THE CLOUD SAFER OR MORE DANGEROUS?

MAKING BACK UPS ROUTINE

If you're not sure about the term "cloud" it's basically shorthand for an external company storing your data for you which you can access over the internet. Examples of which are, DropBox, OneDrive, Box etc. These are much more convenient for storing lots of files, but often only give you a certain limit free. However, in our opinion it is certainly worth the investment. Whilst some people consider their business information to be too confidential to share over the internet with cloud services, for the vast majority, cloud services are sufficiently secure.

HOW TO MAKE IT ROUTINE?

Using some of the ideas above, spend some time to create a backup routine you can keep up with. For instance, you could use DropBox and ensure all you're working on is uploaded at the end of the day, in addition, once a week back up to an external hard drive and for key critical documents email them to yourself as you go.

For instance, my personal setup for backing up my personal data, is such. I have an external hard drive which is always plugged into my laptop which I work off (meaning if my laptop died, I'd retain my data), I backup to a home server every couple of hours and use a variety of cloud services for different types of data.

Each routine will be specific to the person and business. If you'd like to talk about what might be best for your business, get in touch.



FIND OUT MORE

We run a series of business strategy and cyber workshops specifically designed for SMEs in Lancashire. We're passionate about seeing Lancashire business become more cyber aware and innovative and so offer funded places for companies to come and learn how to defend, innovate and grow their business. Additionally, we have an experienced technical team ready to help you with your business innovation ideas particularly around cyber and digital innovation.

To find out more about how your business can access support or register on one of upcoming workshops contact us: cyberfoundry@lancaster.ac.uk

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Geraint Harries

Before starting at Lancaster University over 4 years ago, Geraint had worked in software development roles in both IBM and the Civil Service. In addition to being a qualified teacher, Geraint has worked freelance with a varied client base as a software developer and graphic designer.

