

Ensuring Secure Data Preservation - IO



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January 4th, 2011 / admin / 0 comments

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A growing number of businesses are facing the need to securely retain larger amounts of data over longer periods of time. New regulatory mandates, increasing litigation risks and evolving business requirements all mean that companies now must keep a wide range of data intact and available for many years—forever, in some cases.

Improved and lower cost archival technologies are making long-term data storage more convenient and affordable. Yet many challenges still remain. Exactly what data needs to be stored? Where should it be kept? How can it be protected? These are just a few of the questions businesses ponder when thinking about long-term data storage.

To determine if your organization's storage practices are keeping pace with evolving real world needs, consider these points:

Media Matters: Long-term storage media choices boil down to three different formats: magnetic tape, magnetic disks (i.e. hard drives) and optical discs. Out of these choices, tape presents the lowest media cost and the greatest long-term stability, with optical being the most expensive and least stable long term storage technology. Research firm Clipper Group in 2008 estimated that tape storage is about 23 times less expensive than SATA disk archiving solutions. Meanwhile, magnetic disk's energy costs were up to 290 times higher than tape.

Keep or Delete?: Most businesses generate a great deal of data, ranging from the vital to the trivial and everything in-between. Complying with storage mandates without wasting money by permanently archiving valueless data requires creating a detailed storage policy.

Some storage choices are essentially no-brainers. You'll certainly want to retain all of your transaction data, customer and employee records and internal and public emails. Data generated by research projects and business partners also needs to be archived. All other types of information should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The final storage policy should be

distributed to the IT staff members in charge of long-term storage initiatives as well as the various departments responsible for creating and managing vital data, such as finance, human resources and legal.

Dealing With Duplicates: Deduplication technology, which relentlessly scours storage systems for duplicate files, shrinks storage capacity requirements. The technology can pay for itself over the long term by freeing up bandwidth, speeding backups and trimming media and storage device expenses.

Providing a Suitable Environment: Archived data should be placed in a safe, controlled environment that will protect the media against physical threats, such as fire and floods. It's also a good idea to store copies of critical files at one or more secondary locations. Alternatively, copies can be stored in the cloud, as long as appropriate security and data integrity measures are taken.

Ensuring Security: Inadequate security can place your business in direct violation of storage mandates, resulting in a variety of compliance headaches leading up to legal action and penalties. Lax safeguards can be very costly over the long term. The Ponemon Institute, an information management consulting firm, reports that data breaches cost organizations an average of \$200 per compromised customer record.

Efficient Records Management: Simply saving data isn't enough; your archive also needs to be quickly and easily accessible for both internal and external information requests. Records management software, available from a variety of vendors, helps data center team members manage tape, disk and other types of storage devices from a single, convenient screen. Most records management offerings also provide built-in diagnostic, reporting and troubleshooting capabilities. These features ensure that storage technologies are prepared to supply data 24×7.

Make Regular Assessments: Periodically check your long-term storage system to ensure that it's keeping pace with business and regulatory needs. Also make sure that your storage media isn't becoming obsolete. More than one business has been shocked to discover that its data, carefully stored on quality media in a pristine environment, was still unreadable because it was written in a format no longer supported by modern devices. Whenever new storage technology is deployed, convert critical legacy data into a compatible format.

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