



I heard on line backup is free!

The decision as to the suitability of on line backup to you depends very much on the type of user you are and the type of data you work with. The value of the data to you must somehow be measured tangibly in monetary terms. In effect, the intangible value of your holiday photos may far exceed that of your excel spread sheets while the tangible value of your spreadsheets may make you more likely to pay for a subscription to ensure you don't lose them. For the purposes of perusing the decisions involved here we will break down on line backup in to the following categories.

Personal backup

Free backup

Small business backup

Server backup

Enterprise Backup

PERSONAL ONLINE BACKUP

Certain types of data such as office documents, accounts and payroll are ideal for on line backup as they are generally low in data size and are critically required. Almost every user whether home, small office or corporate has some data of this type and it is ideal for on line backup and provides the required security with value for money. By comparison, music and video files use significant space and would need to be personal copyright related or of extreme importance to the user to warrant the expense involved.

FREE ONLINE BACKUP

The free lunch does exist and it is awful. Broadly, such providers do not actually backup data. It is kept on a mirror server only. No live tech support is offered and all inquiries are by email only and are likely not to be answered promptly if at all. The providers take no responsibility for your data. They make no commitment to you and you (by downloading the software) commit to full responsibility without assistance. Better to manage your backups off line. When you lose data you will not fare well getting help from a free service (and why should you). When people lose data they want assistance immediately. In the words of governor Norton from Shaw shank redemption when Andy Dufraine went missing, "I want him found now, not tomorrow, not after breakfast, now!" Regardless of your normal temperament, that is the type of attitude you are likely to have when you lose data. Make sure you are dealing with people who have the ability inclination and responsibility to respond.

SMALL BUSINESS BACKUP

For small business, the decisions regarding on line backup can be outlined as follows.

What data can we absolutely not lose and is not available from any other party? The answer to this is generally accounts, payroll, internal database and vital office docs. In addition you would likely add some data which is retrievable from elsewhere but not necessarily as quickly as may be required such as critical supplier or printer provided documents and data. The next task is to examine where that data is stored. The bulk of critical data should be on a server but user practicality or budget may have prevented this. Also, some software data (particularly payroll) is generally kept on the users workstation. After establishing where the data is, you need to decide if you are going to avail of on line backup for all of the identified systems or run through network drives from the server or a limited number of systems. Your intended provider should be able to guide you on this.

ENTERPRISE ONLINE BACKUP

If you represent a large corporation it is strongly recommended you involve key I.T. Management personnel and your intended provider from the outset. By all means run a trial on your personal PC to establish the relevant provider lives up to their promise. Any additional installs should be a group decision to enable best practice and economies of scale.