

The Value of Effective Disaster Recovery Planning

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Your organization is producing and saving more information than ever before. With the price of storage decreasing due to ongoing advances in technology, many businesses double their stored information every 18 months. Often this is a result of business initiatives, laws, and federal requirements that mandate that organizations retain specific information for a designated number of years. Industry rules often necessitate stringent reporting regulations to both regulatory agencies and customers, increasing the growth in retention requirements and data output.

Advances in technology have also driven the growth of information — and the subsequent need for storage — to enormous proportions. Where the previous industry standards included megabytes and gigabytes, storage reservoirs now boast the ability to hold terabytes and exabytes. As quantities grow and as regulations change, it becomes increasingly more difficult to determine what information should be preserved and what should be destroyed.



Disaster recovery means different things to different companies. For some, disaster recovery means protection against the accidental deletion or loss of files. Others anticipate man-made or natural disasters. Without access to their records, businesses could potentially suffer catastrophic losses from which they might never recover.

contingency plans

As business records accumulate, the obligation to manage and protect company information escalates. This has been underscored by recent events that have brought the world's attention to the need for disaster recovery preparedness. Terrorist acts, hurricanes, floods, blackouts, mudslides, and fires have forced businesses to look at their records in a new light. Companies are realizing that although paper files are extremely vulnerable to loss or damage, computerized files are equally susceptible.

Virus and worm attacks, as well as unforeseen network shutdowns, all have the capacity to grind business processes to a halt. But what constitutes an emergency? Disaster recovery means different things to different companies. For some, disaster recovery means protection against the accidental deletion or loss of files. Others anticipate man-made or natural disasters. Without access to their records, businesses could potentially suffer catastrophic losses from which they might never recover.

Recovery strategies are also essential because Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX), HIPAA, Gramm-Leach-Bliley, Check 21, and dozens of other regulations necessitate that companies institute thorough emergency preparedness plans. Regulators can impose harsh punishments and fines, and offer no latitude when a company is unable to meet requirements due to a disaster or other data-loss event. As businesses evaluate their contingency plans and prepare for emergencies, it is imperative that they place the highest priority on the integrity of their company records and perform regular database backups.

backups vs. record management

Backup can be a complicated, intimidating process, whether it involves storing data on some form of removable storage medium, a secure offsite storage reservoir, or both. Tapes are often cumbersome and disorganized. To complicate matters, administrators face difficulty in determining which information warrants backup. Often, a contingency plan involves making backup copies of everything. This expensive strategy can backfire in instances where federal regulations require deletion of sensitive information after a designated number of years. Redundancy is important; but it is also essential that disaster recovery backups involve a method of differentiating information which is mission critical from information that is less important.

To realize the greatest benefit from a backup and recovery strategy, it is vital for businesses to consider the life cycles of records, and which records have immediate relevancy to the business. The rationale behind this strategy is two-fold. By archiving less-relevant records on an inexpensive and slower medium, businesses can save money but still have access to older data. More importantly, this practice will facilitate increased access, and speed of access, to current records. During disaster recovery, large volumes of historical data can significantly delay the recovery process. Hours (or even days) could be lost while older, less important data is restored. For some companies, this delay can translate into millions of dollars. In terms of record life cycles, storage, archiving, retention, and destruction are factors worth consideration to avoid prolonging the recovery process.



Ensuring the safety and confidentiality of records is particularly difficult when one considers that there are more than 8000 state and federal regulations that affect records management. The best way to overcome this difficulty is to automate the process, which removes any potential for human error or inappropriate access to records.

By storing current records on disk and other high-availability storage media, companies can ensure fast, immediate access and retrieval of relevant information. This information needs to be prioritized in advance to prepare for possible disaster recovery, ensuring less downtime after disaster strikes. Government- and industry-regulated retention and destruction schedules should also be implemented when considering a disaster recovery plan. By automating these schedules, businesses can ensure compliance with regulations that demand file retention or destruction. This practice also ensures that the volume of company records does not become unwieldy.

In a paper-based system, the records management component of disaster recovery can be a full-time job. Ensuring the safety and confidentiality of records is particularly difficult when one considers that there are more than 8000 state and federal regulations that affect records management. The best way to overcome this difficulty is to automate the process, which removes any potential for human error or inappropriate access to records.

For information about Optical Image Technology's DocFinity® Hierarchical Storage Manager (HSM) as a Disaster Recovery Solution, please visit: www.docfinity.com/products/hsm_disaster_recovery.htm, or contact our sales team at info@docfinity.com or 814-238-0038.

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