

Small Businesses Need to Backup Data

By ANDREW JOHNSON, The Arizona Republic
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Cash-strapped entrepreneurs often put investments in information technology at the bottom of their administrative to-do list.

But a recent study from Carnegie Mellon University shows small-business owners should think twice before skipping out on a system for backing up their data.

The study found hard-drive failure rates to be higher than those cited by the commonly used vendor ratings.

Rod Mirador, a Phoenix-based consultant with Best Buy for Business, said any business, regardless of size, needs to have a plan for recovering lost data.

Mirador said one of the biggest mistakes he sees small businesses make when it comes to backing up their hard drives is trying to do it on the cheap.

"They tend to think that it's simply putting a thumb drive or flash drive in their USB port and putting data in it and bringing it home," he said. "They're like lipstick cases. Those are easily broken, and you can easily lose them. We're talking about backing up your company's data on these things."

The good news is backing up data does not have to be overly complicated or extremely expensive. Businesses today have several options for securing their information, depending on their size.

Those options include:

- **External hard drive.** This option is good for businesses that have one or two computers, with one of the computers being the primary storage device for most data. A standard 500-gigabyte hard drive can cost between \$200 and \$300. The average internal PC hard drive stores between 80 and 160 gigabytes.
- **Network-attached storage device.** This next-step-up works well for companies that have a handful of computers all working on the same network. Five hundred gigabytes of network-attached storage can cost about \$500. Price per gigabyte typically decreases with the more gigabytes you purchase. A thousand gigabytes of storage can cost around \$700.
- **Tape backup device.** Businesses with larger networks of 10 or more computers will find this an effective option. Data is stored locally on the network server and recorded daily on a backup tape drive. Tapes are typically replaced each day and stored off-site. Costs can range from \$500 to several thousand dollars depending on size.
- **Online storage.** Online storage has been available for large businesses for several years but has become more popular among small and medium-size firms as costs have come down. Several services now specialize in catering to businesses with 20 or fewer employees. Each company prices its services differently. Carbonite, a Boston-based service, charges clients a flat fee of \$50 per year for unlimited data storage. In its first year, the company has backed up more than 1 billion files and restored close to 100 million files for clients, according to Swami Kumaresan, vice president of marketing.