

Backing Up Your Stuff Part 3: Software

By Richard Lowe

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This is the third article in a series. To read part 2, see "Backing Up Your Stuff Part 2: A Solution".
<http://www.internet-tips.net/System/backup01.htm>

All right, now you need to consider what software you will use to back up your data.

Do it by hand - One possible method (which will not work if you are using a tape drive) is to simply copy files to your backup media by hand. This does have some advantages:

- It does not cost anything. And after spending the money to buy some backup hardware this may be the best solution.
- It's very easy. Just drag and drop (assuming you are not using a tape drive).

The disadvantages are numerous:

- You must be present to do the backup. However, you could just drag and drop before going to bed.
- Since it requires you to actually perform the backup yourself, you may have a greater tendency to allow backups to slip.
- Your system will be very busy while the backup is being performed, since it is done "in the foreground".

Second Copy - Possibly the best all-around product that I've found for simple backup operations is called Second Copy (this is not an affiliate link - this is an honest recommendation and we will not make any money if you purchase the product). Second Copy is inexpensive (less than thirty dollars for a one user license) and extremely simple to use.

The program sits in your system tray whenever you are logged in. You create profiles (this is very easy) which specify which files to back up, where you want them to go and when you want the backup to occur. The entire process of setting up a profile generally requires a couple of minutes.

What I've done on my own system is create a series of profiles to back up different things.

- I created one profile to back up my Outlook stationary. This is not set to go at any particular time - I must manually start it up when I want this directly backed up. This is because I have set the output to my writeable CD unit, so I only want it to run when I have the proper CD inserted.

- I created a similar profile for my desktop themes, ICQ skins, wallpaper and screen savers.

- I created an automatic profile to perform a disk-to-disk backup of all of my data very few hours. Second Copy only copies those files that have changed since the last run. This gives me a very up-to-date backup in case I have a system failure.

InSync - Another great product is called InSync (again, this is not an affiliate link and we will make no money if you purchase the product). This is similar to Second Copy, although with not as many options. InSync is great for making copies of directories or entire disks very quickly. Like Second Copy, it is very inexpensive - around twenty dollars.

Backup Exec - If you choose to use tape as your backup media, then you are stuck with Backup Exec or a similar product. I have used Backup Exec in both my work (to back up over 100 servers) and at home, and to tell you the truth I have found it to be lacking in numerous regards. The product will do the job, but it tends to be fickle and full of bugs. Add to that the problems associated with tape drives (bad media, no random access) and you've got a backup scheme which is the bare minimum.

Whatever comes with the hardware - Virtually all backup hardware will come with some software which performs backups. If you are strapped for cash, you can use this software. It will perform the job, although perhaps not as well as you would like.

Recommendations - Personally, I use both Second Copy and InSync. Second Copy is better for backing up things like my Outlook Stationary, Desktop themes and ICQ skins. InSync is great for making mass copies of large directories and entire disks (it is faster than Second Copy but not as flexible.)

Next - Handling the worst case scenario: complete system failure.

<http://www.internet-tips.net/System/backup03.htm>

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